



*The
Power of
Women*

JOANNA BARRATT

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Foreward

As a minister of God, and as a father and husband aware of the fact that I must live by example and not just speech, I am all too aware of the power of women. I am aware that the influence of women, other than my wife, is enormous in this sex soaked society.

Women are used to sell everything from cars to coffins. Even a beautiful face has a great effect on men. An airbrushed painted, beautiful face is alluring for a man, and that would be plenty for me to cope with; but when a woman parades her body in different stages of undress for the purpose of selling a commodity then the lure and effect is greater .

Then there is the power of complete nakedness and pornography. Many men in ministry have fallen under this power and there are multitudes of ministers who have not been exposed who are bewitched in this area, according to the polls.

These are obvious powers, but what about the more subtle ones? I have to say that my wife has been a great influence in my life for good, and I would not be the man I am today without her feminine ways to convince and pull me in directions I did not want to go. Of course in my love for her I have been tempted many time to give in to her decisions when I knew that I should stand and be strong. There is always a fine line, and it is a brave – or stupid man that says he always makes the right decisions when confronted by one of these powers, whether beneficial or detrimental.

I have enjoyed reading this book because it is my wife who did the writing, and I have appreciated her honesty and astute observations of women. She has not defended women who have used their power in the wrong way, and has praised those who enhanced or bettered their men.

I can recommend this book for it will open your eyes to the way of a man with a maid, and also the way of a maid with a man. I have been fascinated at Joanna's original thoughts on some of the well know women in the bible, and it will stimulate and challenge you as it did me.

Maurice Barratt.

Chapter 1

The Way of a Man With a Maid

Proverbs chapter 30 was a prophecy written by Agur, the son of Jaketh, which he spoke to Ithiel and Ucal. In it he declares outright that he is nobody special but makes mention of the many profound things he has observed during his life.

One particular thing which he was unable to understand was the way of a man with a maid. He had seen how king Solomon, in all his splendour, able to have whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted it, had been impacted by women; and how he had indulged them to his own detriment.

Solomon caught out

When this man, Solomon, had initially been placed on the throne of Israel, he had been undeniably blessed by God with such wisdom as had never been experienced by anyone else before. In all fairness, Solomon had only requested that God would grant him wisdom so that he could rule his people well as had his father, David. But God didn't stop there, he said he would bless him with riches and honour; and promised that if Solomon would walk in his ways he would also bless him with long life.

Agur must have noticed how wise Solomon was with issues between those who had grievances and matters of state, but how easy it had been for the women he loved to manipulate him. He realised that in the matter of love, Solomon didn't act wisely at all, rather it seems they were able to control him, for he indulged them extravagantly, giving in to their every whim. In actual fact he was completely out of his depth.

There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I know not:

- (a) The way of an eagle in the air;
- (b) The way of a serpent upon a rock;
- (c) The way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
- (d) **The way of a man with a maid.**

Proverbs 30:18 & 19

When I looked at the first three examples of what was thought to be too wonderful for Agur the prophet to comprehend, it made me realise that the eagle, serpent and ship were all doing things which would be considered impossible whilst in an element completely out of their depth. Let's take a look at one of the above statements, 'the way of a ship in the midst of the sea'.

The way of a ship in the sea

In this passage of scripture we have the account of the disciples facing a life threatening storm ...

'And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say to him, Master, do you not care that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

Mark 4:37-41

The disciples were seasoned fishermen, but they were scared to death when the storm arose on the

sea out of nowhere, and begged Jesus to come to their rescue. They knew it was not within their power to be able to fight the elements. Panic made them wake Jesus from his sleep to help them deal with the problem. I am sure they only intended for him to bail out the water, secure the ship, and battle the elements with them. They certainly didn't expect him to quell the storm – that wouldn't have even entered their heads.

A similar situation arose when Jonah was on board a ship going in the opposite direction to where God intended him to go. A fearful storm arose and Jonah was found asleep in the bottom of the ship. The sailors woke him demanding that he help them battle the onslaught, not realising he was actually the cause of the problem. When Jonah told them to throw him overboard, they hesitated at first, but the ferocious storm they were going through forced them to give Jonah up to a watery grave. The instinct to survive is one of the greatest instincts we have, so they were prepared to try anything suggested.

In just the same manner the disciples would have done anything for a calm, trouble free and peaceful journey. They knew Jesus had been constantly crowded by people who wanted not only to hear him, but receive a special touch, and he had worked long and hard to meet their needs. He needed his rest, he had deserved it. Unfortunately the situation demanded that all available hands should

be on deck, but what took place when Jesus woke really terrified them because they not only saw him take full command of the situation, but actually witnessed an astonishing miracle, for the wind and sea obeyed Jesus. They hadn't really expected him to still the storm. It is not within the power of mere man to control the elements. That is God's domain.

On holiday

Some years ago my husband, Maurice, and I were on Holiday in Malta and went on a little boat trip around the coast, just a small journey from one harbour to the next. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky and the sea looked so peaceful and calm, but the experience was one that I will never forget.

Once we had left the shore and gone out a little way into the waters, I couldn't believe that the boat owners would consider taking passengers out in such conditions considering it to be completely safe. It seemed to me that the boat was dramatically pitching up and down on huge waves. I was feeling extremely vulnerable and frightened, expecting at any minute that the boat would overturn, so clung frantically to both Maurice and anything solid around me. I was amazed to see the sailors happily handing out drinks to any of the passengers who were brave enough to enjoy them. Just the thought of what they would consider to be dangerous waters was quite alarming!

It was this little experience which made me look more carefully at the incident of the disciples with Jesus in the above passage of scripture. I cannot imagine what fear was in the hearts of these experienced seamen when they begged Jesus to help them combat the storm. To them it was simply a case of 'all hands on deck', everyone was needed at this extremely dangerous time to battle the elements. I don't quite know what frightened them most, the storm or Jesus' reaction!

While the weather conditions are favourable and the water calm, a ship has a good chance of reaching its destination with everyone cosy on board. But if the conditions are adverse, then it is another matter entirely, and many planned boat trips are postponed until the weather is more placid.

So it is with a maid. Solomon thought he knew quite a bit about women, having three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines. But Agur was convinced that women had unbelievable power at their disposal and likened their ways to being as marvellous – or without comprehension – as those of ships on the sea. When all the circumstances are running smoothly then all is plain sailing.

Women can be very unpredictable. They are just like the sea, calm one moment, tempestuous the next, and often for no apparent reason. No matter how long married, the most common phrase amongst husbands is, "I can't understand my wife!"

Two women

In this book I have attempted to outline some basic differences between godly, and ungodly, women. I have noticed that whenever women are mentioned in the Bible, they always fall into two categories; the godly or the ungodly – the Bride of Christ or the Whore of Babylon.

Beauty is only skin deep, and with age, this beauty vanishes. The description of the Whore in Revelation almost fits that of the Bride, they are both beautifully decked out with jewels and costly garments. But their characters are completely different.

I believe a man will never be able to trust his woman unless she has had her mind renewed by Christ, and been transformed by the power of God.

... For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in your heart; neither let her take you with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

Proverbs 6:23-28

... For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now is she without, now in the streets, and lies in wait at every corner.)

So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goes after her straightway, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, and knows not that it is

for his life. Hearken to me now therefore, O you children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she has cast down many wounded: yes, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Proverbs 7:6-27

Chapter 2

Woman Brings Man Down

In Genesis 2:15-20 it states that on the sixth day of creation God made Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. God then told Adam to eat freely from every tree except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if he disobeyed he would surely die. God was very pleased with his creation and found it to be very good.

Insatiable craving

But, watching Adam, he noticed that something was missing ... Adam was on his own. God then

made the decision to make a suitable companion for him, and out of the ground, in the same way that he had made Adam, God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name of it. But Adam was not satisfied with these and could not find any of the animals suitable for him. He had been made in Gods' image and had an insatiable craving to love and be loved.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, **This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:** she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Genesis 2:21-22

It's incredible to think that the very first operation to be performed on the earth was by God when he put Adam to sleep to removed a rib. Men are still using this method today when they operate. Adam woke and was smitten by what God presented to him. It must have been like looking in the mirror. Perfect sinless man looking at his own reflection – perfect sinless woman! This woman had come out of Adam. She was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and he truly loved her.

... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:28

Ideal partner

He was virtually looking at himself. Even perfect sinless Adam loved himself! He loved everything about her, she reflected his glory.

... forasmuch as the man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

1 Corinthians 11:7

Adam, like God, had a desperate need to love. God had seen Adam's need and brought the animals to him, which Adam found to be unsuitable. But this was different. He had now found his true mate, an extension of himself.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

Genesis 2:27

The man was intended to love his wife so much that nothing, and nobody, could come between them. He would forsake everything he formerly held dear, or had any emotional ties with, to enable him to keep his special relationship with his bride.

... and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Matthew 19:5

But it wasn't the same for her. Eve didn't know what it was like to be alone or unloved. She had been specifically designed to be possessed and owned. As soon as the breath of life had entered her body she had been given to this man who both loved and adored her.

One becomes two

There were now two people, two individuals, walking the earth but Adam still maintained his status before God. He was still the man God had made. When God made the woman he had not split Adam in half. As far as God was concerned Adam had not altered and was complete, except for the loss of one of his ribs. He didn't look any different, neither had his character changed. God had formed a completely new person out of the rib. In a similar way babies are formed from two cells – one from the father, one from the mother, and born with their own unique and distinctive personalities. When God addressed Adam in the garden he called him by name ...

And the Lord God called unto **Adam**, and said unto him, Where are you?

Genesis 3:9

Even after Adam had named her, God didn't recognise Eve by her name. He made a complete distinction between Adam and Eve by always referring to her as '*woman*' or '*wife*'.

And the Lord God said unto the **woman** ...

Genesis 3:13

Unto the **woman** he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow ...

Genesis 3:16

And unto **Adam** he said, Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your **wife** ...

Genesis 3:17

This way of addressing them both was not negative or meant as an insult upon Eve. God did not regard the woman as second class, or inferior, he was just establishing an order, and this distinction between man and woman should not be feared. It should actually make a woman feel more secure knowing that God was treating her with great consideration as he expected Adam to take responsibility for her. In like manner parents are to take responsibility for their children. Adam was the one God had placed in authority.

Liberated woman

It is my opinion that once a woman has been liberated she has no conscience.

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness.

Proverbs 30:20

We must remember here that God had not spoken directly to Eve concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had spoken personally to Adam.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. **And the Lord God commanded the man**, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

Genesis 2:15-17

God expected Adam to relay his commandments to those for whom he was responsible. It was up to him to let Eve know that it was forbidden to eat of this particular tree, and it was his job to see that Eve obeyed God's law. It is quite obvious from scripture that Adam had obeyed God by making Eve fully aware of the consequences of eating from this tree because when the serpent questioned her concerning it she knew exactly what he was talking about and instantly replied...

We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,

God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

Genesis 3:2-3

When Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, although she was indirectly disobeying God, she was in fact, directly disobeying her husband. He had relayed the instruction and it was his word to her that she was disregarding.

Identity crisis

So, what got into Eve to make her ignore her husband's instructions? It is clear that he had made her aware that it was God's intention that they should eat and enjoy what had been made available to them, especially the tree of life. He had also pointed out the punishment for disobeying God's instruction. But she had not been made aware of the apparent benefits disobedience would bring ... and the serpent was more than willing to let her into this little secret. He seduced and enticed Eve to covet what God had forbidden.

And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die; for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise**, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat,

and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Genesis 3:4-6

Eve must have weighed it all up in her mind and ended up believing what the serpent had said. After all, she knew God to be a good God. She only had to look at the work of his hands in the garden and in the animals to see what kind of a character he had. Hadn't he provided for their every need? She and Adam had companionship with him, they walked in the garden in the cool of the day and communed together. Surely it must be true what the serpent said, that they would not die. God must be just holding something back from them that he wanted for himself, something which kept them all on a different level from each other.

Eve looked, and listened; the devil's planted seed bore fruit in her heart and she became covetous. She desired to be wise and have her eyes opened so that she could become like God, and make her own decisions. She wanted to be independent and have her own identity. She wanted equality.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be **desired** to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband **with her**; and he did eat.

Genesis 3:6

Just a test?

For goodness sake, Adam was standing right next to his wife! With his incredibly high level of intelligence why on earth did he allow her to drool over, never mind touch, or eat from, that tree? If Adam was not deceived, as clearly stated ...

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being
deceived was in the transgression,

1 Timothy 2:14

... then what possessed him to allow her to pick the fruit? Surely he should have taken responsibility for her actions.

Was this just complete negligence, and lack of responsibility on his part? Perhaps indulgence, because he didn't want to deny her anything she wanted. Or did he need to allow her freedom of choice so that he could see what was in her heart?

Jesus tested people by putting obstructions in their way when they said they would follow him. He even spoke in parables just so that those whose hearts were not right before God would not understand and be converted. Adam was made in the image of God so he must have had a similar character to God's. Whatever his motive for allowing such an action, Eve took the fruit and deliberately ate it.

Restrictions removed

Once Eve had experienced eating the forbidden fruit, **her eyes were opened** and she became liberated. There were no longer any restrictions upon her. Without realising it she had broken down the final obstruction and was now completely independent. As far as she was concerned, she had done no wickedness, that's why she gave it to her husband. She had proved that her gut reaction had been correct, God had not sent a bolt of lightening and killed her, she was still alive. God had been hiding something from them.

Perhaps women were not made to be so sensitive towards God. Just a thought! Maybe their sensitivity was meant to be towards their husbands, after all God created Eve from Adam, for Adam. It could be that God intended a woman's direct emotional communion to be with her husband. That she would see him as her Lord. Even now we have a mediator – Jesus Christ, who always stands in between us and God.

Adam's dilemma

Adam was faced with a dilemma once Eve had eaten. He knew the action was complete and utter disobedience, and that disobedience would not go unpunished. He was the one who had been told personally by God what the consequences of such an

action would be. So, what should he do now? Should he continue to be obedient to God and not eat the fruit ... and lose Eve as a result?

He already had a close relationship with God because he walked with him in the garden. He knew enough about him to know that what God said would come to pass. After all God's spoken word had only just created the heavens, and the earth, and all that dwelt therein. If God said anyone who ate the fruit would die, then obviously Eve would die whilst he, himself, would continue to live forever without her. Adam would continue to be in the garden, eating from the tree of life, whilst she would be cast out and cut off from that life source.

So, now he had a choice. Should he eat what she was offering him, become a willing participant in this sin so that he could stay with her? But he knew this would mean losing God as a result?

The question he then had to ask himself was, whom did he love more? It was a simple choice – God or Eve? It was as plain and blunt as that. We all have this choice to make, and Jesus made it clear that we will all have to make decisions which will be difficult, painful, and very costly.

No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.

Matthew 6:24

Adam loved God, but he also loved Eve, he had to choose. There was no way he would consciously think in his heart that he hated God, but his actions proved what there was deep down, for he preferred to stay with Eve. When it boiled down to it, and he was confronted with making a decision, he actually loved Eve more than God. Jesus also said,

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:21

Wages of sin

How sad that, when given that priceless gift of freedom, our flesh can only make wrong choices. They both showed what was in their hearts – Eve loved herself more than Adam, and Adam loved Eve more than God.

As soon as Adam had made his decision to disobey, and give in to his wife's fancy, that link of communication with God was broken. Eve also felt the change immediately and instinctively knew that what she had done was wrong, for as soon as Adam and Eve had both eaten ...

... their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sowed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons, and when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,

Adam and his wife hid themselves from his presence.

Genesis 3:7-8

The New Testament teaches that the unsaved partner in a marriage is sanctified by the saved partner. Not only is the unsaved partner sanctified, but any unsaved children in the household living under the same roof are sanctified also. God has certainly gone the extra mile to enable relationship.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.

1 Corinthians 7:14

The problem is if both Christian partners fall away from God then their lines of communication are completely broken. They are both in the same pit, and neither partner can pull the other out.

Communication breakdown

When God questioned them both as to why they had eaten the fruit, Eve didn't apologise for her disobedience, rather she said the serpent had beguiled her and blamed him. Maybe things would have been different if they had both repented and begged God for mercy, I don't know. Maybe it was because of their attitude rather than their action that God cursed them so severely? But one thing is for sure, disobedience will always be punished.

Woman belongs to man

It was only after the fall that the woman received her own identity and was named. But even then the Bible emphasises God's direct and exclusive dealing with man.

Unto **Adam** also and to his **wife** did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

And the Lord God said, Behold, **the man** is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent **him** forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence **he** was taken.

Genesis 3:22

So He drove out **the man** ...

Genesis 3:24

There is no mention of the woman here, she belonged to the man so he took her with him. The scripture states that a man would leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. This meant that Adam was prepared to leave those nearest and dearest to him – in this case, God Almighty – to cleave to his wife, and that was why he took the fruit when Eve offered it to him.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And **Adam was not deceived**, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

1 Timothy 2:13-14

Adam knew exactly what he was doing. His decision was a very calculated one. He now faced a very earnest problem. The situation was that Eve had rebelled and done what Adam had specifically instructed her not to do. What should his response to this action be? He knew it would separate him from God, but he preferred to cleave to Eve, the woman who was now bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, someone he could look at, converse with, touch, hold, constantly have companionship with. We cannot underestimate the dilemma Adam was in. But he proved his love to Eve by leaving his Heavenly Father and cleaving to his earthly wife – the one that God had personally made for him.

Divided loyalties

This was the reason God gave for cursing Adam. God never intended that he should take instruction from his wife.

And unto **Adam** He said, Because you hast **hearkened unto the voice of your wife ...**

Genesis 3:17

He was meant to listen to God and obey Him. It should never have come to the stage where Adam

would have divided loyalties. He was meant to give allegiance to God and none other. When God discovered what was in their hearts he gave them what they wanted but it brought 'leanness into their souls' ...

And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

Psalm 106:15

They had to suffer the consequences. They were banished from Eden where they had basked in their idyllic living conditions and were forced to live outside where they had to labour with their own hands for what God had generously provided previously. There was no turning back either, for God blocked their re-entry into this wonderful paradise by placing Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to make sure they could not have access to the tree of life.

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from where he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 3:23-24

God now decreed that Adam would till the ground, a constant reminder that this was his humble beginning. Man is not, and will never be,

equal to God. He was made from dust, and will now always return to dust, because of his wilful disobedience.

Greater love has no man

How Adam must have regretted making that decision ... And yet, what else could he do when he loved Eve so much? His need for their constant relationship and companionship had, in essence, reduced him, potentially causing him to become her slave whom she could emotionally manipulate.

I don't think any woman who has ever lived has been loved so passionately, so perfectly, as this very first woman. She was indeed treated in a very special way.

Chapter 3

Hearkening to Women

By making his choice to leave God and stay with Eve, Adam now knew whom he loved most. He had enjoyed a perfect relationship with his Maker, walked in the garden on occasions, been provided for and indulged in, but Eve was him, flesh and blood, someone he could touch, hold, love. His relationship with Eve was totally different to the one he had with God and, in that brief moment, he realised he wanted her more.

Eve was a threat

The first commandment that God gave to the children of Israel was the very one that Adam broke when he put Eve before God. Without realising the

implications of what he was doing she had literally become his idol ...

You shall have no other gods before me.

Exodus 20:3

Eve had now become a direct threat to God. Adam had chosen her above him. This action must have cut God's heart to the quick for all things he had made were for his own personal pleasure, but Adam's free will was only bringing him severe pain.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:5

The above scripture makes it very clear what God desperately wanted from man, whom he had made in his image.

And unto **Adam** He said, Because you have **harkened unto the voice of your wife ...**

Genesis 3:17

Harkening is more than just listening, it's acceptance of what is being spoken. Adam was meant to listen to God and obey only Him. Eve had now become a direct threat to God. Adam had chosen her above him. This action showed where Adam's loyalty lay and this was the reason God gave for cursing him.

God finds a friend

There are few instances in the Bible where the characters of certain individuals attract God's attention and they find his favour. Abraham was such a man who had a very special and rare relationship. The Bible even goes so far as to say, in James 2:23, that Abraham was the Friend of God. He loved the Lord God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength. He had no Bible to read – it hadn't even been written – but he knew God and spoke with him face to face, as man to man, when he pleaded for the life of his nephew Lot who was living in Sodom with his family. When God called him he said ...

Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will shew you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him.

Genesis 12:1-4

Abram was seventy-five years old, his wife Sarai sixty-five years old, and without questioning he did as God told him because he had a special relationship with God and knew his voice. He left his father and all that was familiar to him, to wander across the

desert as a blind man to find where God would lead him.

When God intended to bring judgment upon Sodom, he called round at Abram's house to share his intentions with his friend. He even allowed Abram to plead for the safety of any righteous souls who may live in the city because his nephew, Lot, and Lot's family lived there. After the defeat of the four kings against five in the vale of Siddim (Genesis 14) Abram had seen first hand what Sodom was like when he had rescued and returned all the people and goods the enemies had taken captive. He was fully aware of the despicable iniquity of the city and refused to allow the king of Sodom to reward him in any way. He wouldn't take from a thread even to a shoelatchet. No, nothing that was his, because it was defiled and sullied. He would not allow the king of Sodom the pleasure of taking any credit for making him rich. Sodom deserved everything God planned to hurl at them, they were ripe for the judgment of God.

Yet, so great was the relationship between God and Abram that, the angels rescued Lot's family before fire and brimstone fell, even though the number of righteous souls was lower than had been agreed. At the final request God had agreed to save the city for the sake of ten righteous souls, but at that time only four of Abram's relatives were still in some sort of relationship with God. When warned of impending doom Lot's sons-in-law laughed and didn't see the need to flee. So although God had

decided to destroy the city, he was prepared to bend over backwards to help his friend by removing these four relatives before his judgement fell.

Unspoken prayer

God knew what Abram was after when he was pleading with him, and although he had not spelled it out, God had heard Abram's unspoken request for his family and answered his prayer. We may never know what the prayers of God's friend's hearts can achieve in this life. Abram was not aware that God had rescued Lot before his judgment fell, he only saw the smoke ascending up to heaven from that wicked city. But God is indulgent with those he loves and will do far and above what we are able to hope for.

But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

God really loved Abraham and wanted to bless him by making a great nation out of him. He promised that his seed would be as the sand on the sea shore, as the stars in the sky, but the years rolled by and his beautiful wife, whom he loved dearly, continued to be childless.

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am

your shield, and your exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look out toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall your seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6

After making this promise to Abram, the Lord then entered into a covenant with him (Verse 18) to set the seal on what he had spoken.

Sarah an example

I believe with all my heart that Sarai was a godly woman. In the first letter of Peter it seems that women are encouraged to look at her life and take her as their example ...

'Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning

let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

1 Peter 3:1-6

I am convinced that Sarai believed what God had spoken to Abram; but because she was seventy-five years old, had been married to him for many years without having children, and had gone through the menopause thus preventing any possibility of her conceiving, she felt that she could no longer hope to become a mother. It must have been very hard to come to the decision, but by being unselfish and giving her handmaid to become one with him, she thought this was a way to allow Abram to receive the child God had promised him. In the chapter immediately following on from where God makes a covenant with Abram we find that out of love for her husband Sarai puts this suggestion to him.

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram,

Behold now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing: I pray you, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. **And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.** And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived.

Genesis 16:1-4

Stunning woman

I'm sure it wasn't in Sarai's heart to share her husband's love with another. She may have been advanced in years, but the Bible seems to deem it very important for us to realise that she was an extraordinarily beautiful woman. She must have been around seventy to seventy-five years old when Abram feared that the Egyptians would kill him to get his beautiful wife, so he asked her to be kind to him and call him her brother.

And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

Genesis 12:14

She must have been some woman for the Pharaoh to go to these lengths to have her. He was the king in Egypt and could have the pick of all the gorgeous girls in his realm, but he wanted Sarai, and was prepared to pay handsomely for her by giving Abram sheep, oxen, asses, camels and servants. If Abram hadn't loved his wife so much he could have been very content with all that he was earning out of her.

It's no wonder Abram was worried about people knowing she was his wife. Nobody would have thought twice about killing a wandering Hebrew just so they could take his wife as spoil if they had a mind to. In this case the blessing of having a beautiful wife could also have been his curse. But because Sarai didn't have eyes for anyone other than Abram she pretended she was only his sister. I'm sure Pharaoh would have happily given Abram women if he'd wanted more wives. Pharaoh was prepared to make him a very rich relation.

But God was protecting his promise to Abram and *'plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.'* Abram didn't want anyone else, he loved with a passionate love, this woman he had found to be flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. Love is not something that necessarily has to happen when we marry – love is to do with chemistry. If the chemistry is working between two people, then the sparks will fly and ignite the flames in the heart.

Unselfish woman

Sarai was godly, but she was also a woman, and must have been well aware of her God given feminine charms which caused her husband to love her so dearly. Abram was everything to her and I'm sure she had no intention of sharing his love with anyone else, but she certainly didn't want to be the one who hindered God's plan.

In Genesis 16:2 we see that little remark, *And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai...* Just prior to this verse in the previous chapter, God had made a covenant with Abram telling him his seed would be likened to the stars in the sky.

And he believed in the Lord, and God counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 15:6

But then he *hearkened unto the voice of Sarai ...* and allowed Sarai to give him her handmaid to be his wife. Abram wasn't interested in other women. Sarai was seventy-five years old but she was still absolutely gorgeous, a stunner! It wasn't sex that tempted Abram to go by another route, it was natural thinking – the fruit of faith which was a desire to see the promise of God fulfilled – and the mistake of not asking God for his opinion on the matter. He hearkened to the voice of Sarai instead of God, consequently Ishmael was born.

No Ishmael, no Isaac

Now I am not saying that it is wrong to birth an Ishmael. I have heard many sermons which emphatically state that we should avoid the Ishmaels and only birth Isaacs. But I actually think this is not correct. In fact I would go so far as to say that it is necessary to get the bad first, before the good.

This seems to be a principle throughout the Bible. We have the first Adam who fell in the Garden of Eden and plunged the entire world into sin; then we have the second Adam, Jesus, who lived the perfect, sinless life and made it possible for the whole world to be redeemed.

We have Saul chosen to be King of Israel by God himself, but he turns out to be rebellious; and so God chooses another to rule in his stead. David was the man God chose, and was actually 'a man after God's own heart'. We have been warned that antichrist will be revealed and set up his kingdom on this earth first before Jesus Christ returns to reign on the earth in the millennium.

For thirteen years Abram must have believed that this child Ishmael was the child God had promised to him. In Genesis 17 the Lord appeared to Abram, when he was ninety-nine years of age, and instituted circumcision. That meant that he, Ishmael, and all the males in his household were to be circumcised.

It was only after this circumcision that God revealed his divine plan, that he was going to bring about the promise through the woman with the dead womb. God didn't only open Sarai's womb, but he also changed their names to Abraham and Sarah before they eventually did get their Isaac.

Miracle baby

Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety when their promised child was born. He fathered Ishmael before he was circumcised and had his name changed. **Ishmael was the child of uncircumcision, and an old nature.** God had not yet made a covenant with Abram. But with Isaac it was vastly different. **Isaac was the child of circumcision, and a new nature.** There had to be sacrifice for circumcision – a cutting away of the flesh, and there had to be a name (character) change. **Abraham was now a holy, separated, marked man; a circumcised vessel, when he passed his seed to Sarah.** But not only that, Isaac was the child born out of love. Abraham loved Sarah, and Sarah loved Abraham. Serving God must not be out of duty and to fulfil a commandment, it must be from the heart, out of love. Isaac was the promise of a new breed of people! God's people!

The same day Isaac was weaned Abraham made a great feast and Sarah saw Ishmael mocking. For years she had put up with Hagar's disdain, but now she was so upset that she said to Abraham,

Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in your sight because of the lad, and because of your bondwoman; **in all that Sarah has said unto you hearken unto her voice**, for in Isaac shall your seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is your seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away.

Genesis 21:10-14

I'm sure Sarah would have used all her feminine wiles to get her husband to do what she asked. Yes, she was ninety years old, but don't let her great age fool you ... she was still an incredible beauty. Only a few months before giving birth to Isaac, King Abimelech, the most powerful man in Gerar, sent and took Sarah for himself thinking that she was Abraham's sister. God visited him in a dream and told him he would be a dead man if he touched her so Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham giving him sheep, oxen, and servants, in the hope that he would feel compensated.

Yes, she was a stunning woman. She had to be. How else would Abraham have done what he did, if it wasn't to please his wife. Ishmael had been his

only son for thirteen long years. They had been the most wonderful years of his life. Ishmael must have brought him immense joy in his old age knowing that at last he had an heir, someone to hand the promise of God down to. He must have spent hours training and grooming him to take over after his decease. He bonded and related to this boy more than with anyone in the camp.

Abraham grieves

When God told Abram for the very first time that Sarah would actually conceive and bear him a son, he pleaded for the life of the boy saying, *‘O that Ishmael might live before you!’* And God responded by saying he had heard his request and would bless him for Abraham’s sake. Even though Isaac was on the scene, and the promise had been transferred in his heart and mind, he still had a very special relationship with his first child. It must have been a heart rending experience to be forced to send him and his mother away to wander in the wilderness, never to see them again.

It is a rare man who will allow God to rule his heart. His love for Sarah was without question, he had proved this many times. But in this instance her beauty, femininity, charm, wiles, tears, and pleas had no effect on Abraham, in fact her words were very grievous in Abraham’s sight because of his son, Ishmael.

But God told Abraham to hearken to what she said and gave him the assurance that he would

personally look after Ishmael and make of him a great nation because he was Abraham's seed. Although Abraham's heart bled and was very sore, it must have given him some comfort to know that God was watching over his son.

We must take great notice of Abraham's example. He did not cast Ishmael and his mother out because Sarah told him to. No, it was because **God told him to hearken to her voice**. It is God's voice that a man must obey, not that of a manipulative wife. Men must not receive their instruction from any other than God himself. It is essential men get the order right. A command can only be issued from above, it cannot work laterally.

God is the head

It is not God's order to have two heads in a household – for the man and woman to be equal. The word 'equal' means 'the same'. Men and women are not the same, you only have to look at their biological structure to see the proof of this. Women are not 'second class' or 'inferior' to men, they are different. There is a God given order ... God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the Man, Man is the head of the Woman.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 11:3

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Ephesians 5:23

If there are two heads in the marriage, then the family is controlled by a monster. This will only bring confusion to a home if implemented, and God is not the author of confusion.

Chapter 4

The Liberated Woman

God must have been fully aware of what Eve was capable of, especially as she had stolen Adam's heart from him and Adam had now given his loyalty to her. It must have broken his heart to see how easily Adam betrayed him. God only knew what she was going to do next, for he seemed to pounce on her immediately with his judgment, implementing the sentence before she had the chance to do any more damage.

Unto the woman He said, ...

(1) I will greatly multiply your sorrow **and your conception;**

Genesis 3:16

Don't you think it's an amazing thing to note that animals come on heat once, and in some cases twice per year? I have owned female animals and, watching their behaviour at these times have been amazed to see they are just as alert and active as normal. But not so with the human race.

Women 's problems

I can remember as a young girl my own experience being very painful and arduous. As the hormones being produced began to form my breasts I became very conscious and aware of myself. The slightest touch or accidental knock would cause me such pain I would feel sick. I was constantly folding my arms as a barrier. For months before I began my monthly cycle for the first time I felt unwell. My stomach was bloated, my thighs and pelvis ached so badly that sometimes I could hardly walk and had to lie in bed with a hot water bottle to relieve me. When I did start to bleed I thought the pit of my stomach was going to fall out of me every time I went to the bathroom.

I had it comparatively easy! Some girls at my school actually fainted with the pain and had to be sent home. This experience didn't happen once or twice a year like it does with animals, it actually happened every four weeks – thirteen times per year! For approximately forty years! This is some curse! And such a consistent curse that it should have been enough to slow anybody down.

When my animals were pregnant I was not aware of any changes in their behaviour due to their condition, only the fact that their girth had become bigger. Pregnancy didn't seem to cause them any discomfort.

Not so with the human race. Pregnancy is a real ordeal. OK, some women say they have great pregnancies, but in the majority of cases the opposite is true. My own sister-in-law had to be admitted to hospital and put on drips for a few weeks at the beginning of each pregnancy because she was unable to keep down either food or liquid. Another woman I know personally actually lost weight rather than gained it, and her life was always at risk.

It is also hard to get a grip on life emotionally. I didn't really know what was going on inside my head or body and would cry for no apparent reason. I would react, fly off the handle, shout without provocation, and was extremely unreasonable. My poor husband, Maurice, felt he was living with a time-bomb most of the time, not knowing what I would do or say at any given moment. I don't honestly know how people without God cope with the things they go through in life.

There is also a major change in the body when this process of reproduction is reversed and we experience the menopause. This can cause dramatic problems such as hot flushes, headaches, irrational

behaviour, and makes up for the loss of sexual appetite in quite a number of women.

(2) In sorrow you shall bring forth children

I have also been present when animals have given birth. My dog lay down and knew when her time was upon her. She found a cosy little space and watched her own young being born. When they emerged in a little sack of fluid from her body, she nicked the sack with her teeth and licked the new born puppy dry, and in doing so she massaged and cleaned out its orifices. One dog had a litter of eleven puppies and did the same thing with each pup without any apparent pain.

As for my cat, well, I had padded out a box for her to lie in but each time a kitten emerged she would jump on to my knee for a caress as though she had done something splendid and I would have to put her back into the box to either bear another kitten or look after those she already had. She seemed happy, content, and pain free.

I find it quite amazing that animals can walk and feed almost immediately after birth. Having no hands, only paws, my animals were unable to nurse their young, yet each baby found the mother's teats and suckled without her helping them. Although they swayed and stumbled, they were mobile almost immediately and within a few days were running about playing together.

Child bearing is traumatic for the human body. In the West we take it for granted because we have well equipped hospitals, but in many countries of the world women die when they experience complications as they are deprived of medical assistance due to either lack of funds or lack of facilities. In the old days when women had complications and were in difficulty giving birth, in order to save the life of at least one of them the doctors would have to break open the mother's pelvic bone to release the child. Thus the mother would lose her life, but the child would be saved.

We are also extremely different to animals in the fact that our babies are totally dependent upon us when they are born. Indeed, most can't walk until around one year old, and they can't feed or look after themselves properly until they are into their teens. It's a long haul and energy sapping on the part of the parent. Birds fly away after a few weeks or months of caring for their young, but we are responsible for, and tied to, our children for approximately sixteen years.

(3) ...and your desire shall be towards your husband

I heard somebody say once that if it were left to the men to have children then the human race would have died out long ago. Well, I think the same could have been said about women, but for the fact that this clause is part of the curse. God said that no

matter what pain she went through, her desire for a sexual relationship with her husband would always return.

(4) ... and he shall rule over you.

‘Relationship’ sounds more like ‘team work’ to me. I’m certain when God gave Eve to Adam it was so they could have a perfect relationship where they were both in complete unity and harmony, working together and fulfilling each other’s needs. Domination is completely different. Domination says one has power and the other has to submit to that authority.

And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Genesis 1:27-28

This was God’s instruction to both Adam and Eve. They were to be the lords of all living things that God had made, but God never told Adam to subdue Eve when he presented her to him. She was him, his other part, his mate – they were one. But once the lines of communication were broken with God, Adam found that the communication which

he had once experienced with his wife was also severed. He was now on a different footing with her, she was no longer on the same level. She had turned him from God, from now on she was always the potential enemy. At any given moment she could come between him and his Maker for her emotional power over him was too great. She needed to be subdued.

Although Adam had stated that a man would leave his father and his mother to cleave unto his wife, so that they could develop that sacred intimate relationship, Jesus said ...

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, **and wife**, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:26

... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

Verse 33

This is serious. Jesus is saying that if you want your lines of communication open to God then nobody should get in between – not even your nearest and dearest. Is Jesus trying to break up families? Not at all, that is not what Jesus is saying. But if it comes to the point where you have to choose, you must be willing to forsake all for God.

Sexual Conflict

I was listening to some sermons of Maurice's speaking on 'Sexual Conflict' at a Men's Seminar some time ago and he stated that men and women looked for different things when seeking a partner in the opposite sex. Men looked for a pretty face and shapely figure, whereas a woman looked for someone with a good character.

Well, let me burst your little bubble, men. Times have changed! Once upon a time, I agree, a woman looked for this from a man because she was unable to support herself and marriage was her only option for finding physical fulfilment and satisfaction. But things changed dramatically during the last century.

After the second world war women decided that they didn't want to go back to being ordinary housewives as they had been put to service and experienced self-respect and self-worth working in the ammunitions factories. They now wanted the right to vote, and vigorously fought for their own independence. They found their voice and spoke out, staged demonstrations, caused riots, and won their freedom which allowed them a say in how the country was run. Since then they have fought in the world of commerce for equal opportunities, equal rights, equal pay, and much more. Many women now bring a higher salary

into the home than their men, hence the need for househusbands rather than housewives because the men stay at home looking after the house and children whilst their wives fulfil their role as breadwinners.

Pop music played a major role to liberate women sexually during the sixties with the fashionable preaching of promiscuous sex in songs. With the introduction of television, vocal and music talent was not enough, now pop icons had to have 'the image' which, in many cases, was more striking than the sound waves. This music indoctrinated the younger generation into believing they were being ridiculously Victorian by sticking to the moral codes and standards of the older generation. It became important to 'do your own thing' and break free from tradition, even if it meant becoming perverted or irresponsible.

Times have changed

Well, things have really progressed now. It's possible to have an almost pain free delivery of your baby. All you have to do is book a date to have a Caesarean Section operation and the surgeons will just give you an anaesthetic, cut you open, take the baby out, and stitch you back up again. Voila! You may be sore for a few weeks, but none of that demoralising labour, nor the terrible pain when the pelvic bones come out of joint

and the uterus is stretched and torn to allow your issue to emerge. None of the toil and sweat of expelling something from your body which just won't budge of its own accord. Many celebrities now take this option as it is convenient and they can fit it into their schedules.

Curse under control

The menopause has caused women so many problems throughout the ages that medical science, looking for a solution, have come up with HRT – Hormone Replacement Treatment. This treatment is intended to put back into the body the hormone which stops being produced once the menstruation years have ended so that women can get on with their lives. There are side effects to this treatment, of course ... such as the fact that it increases the risk of cancer, it cannot safely be continued for more than ten years, and in some cases it has actually killed women. And even if it does work for you, all it actually does is prolong the inevitable and you get all the symptoms of the menopause at a later date. Up to now medical science has not been able to cheat God!

Contraception was promoted and became more easily accessible to both married and unmarried women. At one time it was only the very self assured man who would walk into a chemist's shop and ask for condoms. But I can remember forty years ago when, at my first place

of employment, everybody would talk about the married 'slut' in the factory's Packing Room who was having an affair with one of the employees and made sure her handbag was always well equipped with condoms.

In the office, where I worked, we looked down on such immoral behaviour, but even here one of the married clerical staff made the air blue with the shocking filth which came out of her mouth, and she would seductively tantalise the sales reps at every opportunity, groping them like an animal on heat. It made me ashamed to think she was female.

But even after women go through all the pain of natural childbirth, and they vow that they will never have any more children, instead of refusing intercourse with men, they keep coming back for more, because God has destined that all their desire would return and they would be on the same old treadmill. His intention was to keep women occupied with looking after the home and children, to keep her out of mischief.

But no worries, the pill or condoms can prevent conception. If that fails, for those of us fortunate enough to live in the West, we can demand an abortion. With no feelings of guilt about hacking to bits the child inside the womb so that piece by piece it can be sucked out with a vacuum cleaner, we are assured that this is just an operation to

remove an 'unwanted foetus', rather than murder. If we want to be totally free and live wildly then we can actually request to be sterilised. Yes, we can live life to the full and give way to our reprobate mind. But be warned – if we cheat God out of his curse now, he'll get us back later!

The younger generation

Now, with abortion being made available on demand, schools are obliged to give their students lessons on birth control from a very young age, and provide them with contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies at school. Young boys are being issued with plastic cards with which to access condoms free of charge from machines. Any student who finds herself pregnant need not worry, she will be protected from parents ever becoming aware of what she has been doing because the school will take care of the situation.

Promiscuity is flaunted as being normal practice in the 'soap operas' and those watching feel second class if they are not following the fashionable trends. In fact, they actually feel deprived if they think they are not indulging in what everybody else is doing.

Sex is widely promoted and used to sell everything from baked beans to cars on our television screens, and even if we are strong enough to get rid of the influence that televisions, newspapers and magazines

bring into our homes, every day the bill board hoardings scream their suggestive, immoral and provocative advertisements at us. Everything seems to have gone sex mad and is completely out of control.

No conscience

From the things I have read throughout the bible I have concluded that a liberated woman knows no conscience:

The **woman** shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 22:5

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their **women** did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men ...

Romans 1:26-27

In both these readings women are mentioned first. God puts things in order, and if the Bible mentions women first then it means that they have the greater problem in this area, and are liable to fall for the temptation more easily than men. This is probably the reason why God cursed Eve and all subsequent

women so severely. He knew where her imaginations would take her.

The streets today are full of schoolgirls and young women wearing provocative clothing – tiny skirts; skin tight, low hipped trousers; midriff revealing, low necked and backless tops or dresses – no matter what the weather is like. I never see men walking around revealing their flesh in the same way. It always seems to be the women who are doing the enticing.

The beaches are even more of a problem as, except for a tiny triangle somewhere below the waist, nothing else of the female form is left to the imagination.

The churches are no different. Whatever is being worn on the high street is brought into the church buildings. When will women wake up and realise that God designed us to be attractive to men! Why do we persist in displaying goods in the shop window that aren't for sale? And we wonder why there is rape and abuse! We are all too often the cause of offense by not understanding what our manner of dress stirs up in the hearts of normal, ordinary men.

Worship groups

As we are ministers, my husband and I often sit either on the platforms or front rows of churches,

so get a good view of all the preliminaries before we share. I must confess that all too often we are distracted by those in the 'worship group' who, instead of focussing our attention on God, draw our attention away from him to themselves.

It does not honour God for young women to hold, or stand in front of, microphones dressed in clothing that hugs the shape or reveals the flesh. And it is ten times worse when they dance or sway to the music for this is extremely sensual and provocative. Sometimes I squirm in my seat knowing the effect it must be having on my husband and all the men in the church who have come to the 'house of God'. Our televisions, and especially the 'God Channel', have made us insensitive to the emotions that these worldly performances evoke. They are very seductive. **Ministry should never be presented as entertainment** – this is a prime example of the way the whore has infiltrated the church of God.

I also was at fault as a young woman, even though I was in ministry. I would wear low tops exposing my cleavage, figure hugging dresses flaunting my curves, and tiny skirts showing off my slim legs. I enjoyed the admiring, drooling looks from men at work, yet complained if married men at church stared, saying they should have a pure heart! Let me tell you now, this dress code did not glorify or honour God. No, it actually drew attention away from God and glorified me,

to my shame. And God had to push me off my pedestal.

Wise counsel

The first few chapters of Proverbs is full of instruction and wise counsel which King David is passing on to his son in preparation for when he takes over the throne and rules his people. David has lived and learned. His own soul has yearned and panted after God, and he has kept his commandments with his whole heart, so now he passes on his personal revelation concerning the deception of strange women. It's a pity Solomon listened to it, wrote it down, but didn't adhere to it, for he would have saved himself much heartache and sorrow.

To deliver you from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flatters with her words; which forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house inclines unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

Proverbs 2:16-19

... For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest you should ponder

the path of life, her ways are moveable, that you can not know them. Hear me now therefore, O you children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest you give your honour unto others, and your years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with your wealth; and your labours be in the house of a stranger; and you mourn at the last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me!

Proverbs 5:3-13

... My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck. When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in your heart; neither let her take you with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and

his feet not be burned? So he that goes in to his neighbour's Wife; whosoever touches her shall not be innocent. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; but if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. But whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding: he that does it destroys his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though you give many gifts.

Proverbs 6:20-35

God made for Adam what he would have wished for himself. The woman had come out of Adam, so Adam loved her as an extension of himself. God chose a man – Abraham – and out of his covenant with Abraham, and through circumcision, God produced unto himself a peculiar people who would become his bride.

... And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live. I have caused you to multiply as the bud of the field, and you have increased and grown great, and you are come to excellent ornaments: your breasts are fashioned, and your hair is grown, whereas you were naked and bare. Now when I passed by you,

and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you, said the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then washed I you with water; yes, I throughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with broidered work, and shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; you ate fine flour, and honey, and oil: and you were exceeding beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon you, said the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 16:6-14

He loved, blessed, protected, and nurtured them as his own. But they forgot that they owed everything to him. They became lustful for the things of the world and broke God's heart.

But you trusted in your own beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on every one that passed

by; his it was. And of your garments you did take, and decked your high places with divers colours, and played the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. You have also taken your fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made to yourself images of men, and did commit whoredom with them, and took your broidered garments, and covered them: and you have set my oil and my incense before them. My meat also which I gave you, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed you, you have even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, said the Lord GOD. Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne unto me, and these have you sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of your whoredoms a small matter, that you have slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

And in all your abominations and your whoredoms you have not remembered the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and were polluted in your blood.

Ezekiel 16:15-22

Chapter 5

Man Made in God's Image

Men have physical strength but a terrible emotional weakness where the women they love are concerned. Man has been made in the image of God – and dare I say that although God is almighty, he also has this same emotional need? Deuteronomy makes it crystal clear what God ultimately wanted from man, whom he had made in his image.

God never intended that he would have to force his creation to love him, he always wanted responding love from a willing heart.

...and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:5

Consider his dealings with Jerusalem from the book of Ezekiel.

Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations ...

Ezekiel 16:2

After making Jerusalem aware of the way in which he had found them, he spoke as though Jerusalem was a woman who had been given every chance, but who turned and bit the hand that fed her. God was so disgusted with the show of lewdness, for unlike a prostitute who is paid for the favours she shows, Jerusalem were prepared to pay to commit adultery. They sought out evil, desiring to serve the false gods of the surrounding nations, giving themselves over freely to abominations.

How weak is your heart (fickle), says the Lord God, seeing you do all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman in that you build your eminent place in the head of every way, and make your high place in every street; and have not been as a harlot, in that you scorn hire; but as a wife that commits adultery, which takes strangers instead of her husband!

Ezekial 16:30-32

Jealous husband

Then in the following verses he spells out the whoredoms of Jerusalem and exposes all her sins.

Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD; Because your filthiness was poured out, and your nakedness discovered through your whoredoms with your lovers, and with all the idols of your abominations, and by the blood of your children, which you gave unto them; behold, therefore I will gather all your lovers, with whom you have taken pleasure, and all them that you have loved, with all them that you have hated; I will even gather them round about against you, and will discover your nakedness unto them, that they may see all your nakedness. And I will judge you as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give you blood in fury and jealousy.

Ezekiel 16:35-38

The language is that of a jealous husband who is wracked with pain. When God first set eyes on Jerusalem she was lying abandoned in the gutter and he took pity on her. He lavished her with jewels, gold and silver. He'd clothed her with the finest clothing, fine linen, silk and embroidered materials. She'd eaten the best foods, fine flour, honey, and oil. She had become exceedingly

beautiful because of all his personal attention, so much so that her fame had gone abroad amongst the heathen for she was perfect through his beauty which he had put upon her. But she turned, and began to trust in her own beauty.

She forgot where she came from, what she was, and what God had made her to become. She belittled and abused what God had given to her and gave it away to others. She not only played the whore, but she also took the sons and daughters she had born to God and sacrificed them to be devoured. You would think that God would be so hurt, angry, and frustrated with her that he would just cut her off completely and feel he was well rid of her.

But after God poured out all the feelings of pain and frustration he experienced because of her, he speaks kindly to her.

Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant.

And I will establish my covenant with you; and you will know that I am the Lord: That you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.

Ezekiel 16:60-63

Passionate lover

Why was this God's response to a people who were rebellious and unruly?

God has a need to love. He craves to be loved in return and will bend over backwards to woo us and forgive us, because he has a tremendous need which only responding hearts and spirits returning his love can fulfil.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins... We love him, because he first loved us.

1 John 4:9-10, 19

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Ephesians 5:25-33

Why did Jesus go through all that gruelling torment and pain when he came to earth the first time? He was rejected and scorned not by the common Israelite people, but by the very priesthood, the ones who had access to the scriptures and taught in the synagogues, the ones who appeared to be waiting for the Messiah. Yet when James and John, two of his disciples suggested that Jesus burn

up those who hated and scorned him with fire to make them pay for the way they had treated him, he scolded them, saying they didn't know what spirit they were of. He could easily have dealt with the situation, he had unlimited angels at his disposal; but he chose to suffer and give his life.

... that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:26-27

This was the reason why he suffered every humiliation and affliction – he wanted to prepare for himself the most beautiful, virtuous, pure, woman who had ever walked the face of this planet.

Glorious bride

Like Adam in the Garden of Eden, Jesus Christ has been searching for the 'help meet' or woman suitable to become his Bride. A constant companion and co-worker – his other half.

The woman is the glory of the man, therefore the woman he spends time preparing will bring him honour and be a glorious reflection of himself. People will judge him on what his woman is like. She will not bring the family into

disrepute, but faithfully uplift and embellish it. She will support him and do her utmost to help him reach his full potential by being profitable to his kingdom.

... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but **I speak concerning Christ and the church.** Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 5:28-33

If the husband loves his wife in the way Christ loves the church you would think there should be complete harmony. Adam loved Eve like this, but the problem was that she chose independence.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Ephesians 5:22-24

For the glory

There is a purpose behind the authority of God. It's all very personal. The whole purpose of the woman being obedient so that she can become pure is not necessarily for the woman's benefit, it's so that the man is exalted and glorified. This has nothing to do with pride, or exaggerated ego, on the part of Christ or of the man, this is just part of God's character. Everything must point to God.

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **to the praise of the glory of his grace**, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved ...

Ephesians 1:5

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Ephesians 1:12

This principle is the same with any school. A school is judged by the performance of the students. Likewise, a family or home environment is judged by the behaviour of the children. Christianity is judged by the actions of Christians. Therefore, in a marriage it is essential that the wife respects and elevates her husband, and the children honour and revere their father, as his character will be judged by her behaviour, and that of his children.

Vintage is valuable

If a man wants to be like God and Christ he must work on his wife. It's rather like the motorcar enthusiast who brings home a rare, old model with the idea of fixing it up. Some men spend hours repairing dents, tuning the engine, refurbishing the interior, waxing the body, and modifying particular things, just so that they can take it out for a spin and see the admiration in other people's eyes. Drivers on the road pass by in their vehicles and can't help but say what a fine specimen of workmanship this car is, how shiny and clean, how well preserved for a car of such an age. So a man should be with his woman.

He must love her, cherish her, rule her well, adjust and modify her so that when she is out in public and on view – especially in her old age – her character will reflect his treatment as a husband and earn him praise. She **is** him ... and he must never forget that.

Chapter 6

Women Can Change Their Men

When the chemistry is working between the two sexes, a man will do anything to please his woman. Kings have abdicated thrones to keep the women they love. Maurice always used to say to me that our children must never come between us. He married me, not the children. The children were a consequence of our relationship and should never get in between us. One day they will be of age to find their own partner and leave the home, to set up a new family, and feel no qualms about doing so. It is important that man and wife maintain their unique relationship. Maurice would do anything rather than

lose my love, and this is the area where my power as a woman lies.

Maurice and I have always had a very special friendship as we've been in the ministry together since the 'Ark' almost. There was a very big difference between us, though. I knew I'd been singled out for something by God from a very early age and wanted with all my heart to be more spiritual and godly. I used to go off on holidays either with special friends, or on my own, to fast or just seek God.

As I was the church secretary, I just loved to converse with the pastor about God, and the church for hours, and threw myself one hundred percent into living the life of a disciple. Maurice, on the other hand, said there were two classes of Christians – the practical ones and the spiritual ones. He preferred to be the practical Christian. Nevertheless, when he saw me getting more spiritual and godly it provoked him in a good way to jealousy, and he would jump onto my bandwagon. This irritated me at times as I thought I was always leading him, and as he was older than I, and the minister's son, I expected him to be the one leading me.

The more time I spent with God, the more I changed in attitude and spirituality, and this seemed to provoke Maurice to become godly more than anything else I did.

Family meetings

Because I was the minister's secretary, and his youngest two daughters (Maurice's sisters) were my friends, I spent quite a bit of time round at their house. During these visits the minister, his wife, and myself would often end up praying together and God would invariably show us things in vision. Sometimes Maurice's sisters would join us and we would have a 'family meeting'. I would tell Maurice all that had happened, relating the visions and enthusing about how good God was.

I could see the effect it had on him. He was really pleased for me but I knew that he was also jealous and a little frustrated that he wasn't included. I felt for him, and mentioned to his parents how he was feeling so they told me to invite him round for the evening 'family meeting'.

Maurice made time, thrilled to bits that he was now part of it, and I know it thrilled his parents to see him making moves towards spirituality rather than practicality. They must have been praying for him for years as they knew what an ambitious man he was. His determination had already earned him a place on the England Gymnastic Team during his youth, and he was working towards becoming rich and famous, as his heart's desire was to be a millionaire. God really spoke to us in those days, and we all changed radically.

The minister and his immediate family went away on holiday and I ‘house sat’ for them. I decided that I would use this time in their house to seek God and told Maurice of my intention. He wanted to be part of it, obviously, so we decided he could come round during his lunch hour from work when we could seek God together. One day, as Maurice and I were praying together in his parents’ lounge, God gave me a vision ...

The vision

My hair began to grow. I was sitting in the chair opposite Maurice and the hair from my head just kept growing, flowing down my body, creeping across the floor, to where Maurice was sitting, travelling up Maurice’s body, until it reached the top of his head where his bald patch was. It then began to burrow through his scalp and get into his head where it eventually reached the nerve points at the top of his spine at the back of his neck. The hair fastened itself firmly to the nerve endings and stopped growing.

From the outside of his body I could grab hold of the hair on top of his head and pull it upwards. As I did so I could see his body jump and reflex rather like a chicken’s foot when you pull the sinews.

But just then I saw a hand reach down from heaven holding a pair of scissors. The scissors severed the hair leaving a good few centimetres

exposed and then tied a knot in the part that was still attached to Maurice. Then the hand put the scissors down and began to do exactly what I had been doing, pulling the knotted hair upwards. Maurice limbs jumped up and down as they had done when I had pulled them, but now it was God pulling the strings rather than me ... God was now taking control!

My heart soared to think that God was promising to answer our prayers and take full control of Maurice. Shortly after this Maurice began to make even more of a progression and started calling in to see his father before commencing work in the mornings. He would sometimes drop me off at work and then carry on to his parents' house where he would spend an hour each day talking with his dad as he didn't start work until 10.30 a.m. Things were looking up. I knew what effect Maurice's father had had on me, so I could imagine what it must have been like for Maurice!

Things changed

It wasn't long before he was hot for God, then burning. He began to make radical moves, even to the point where he decided to leave work and go full time in the ministry for God. His father got really scared when he told him about this decision, asking him what had brought this about. "Your preaching, Dad! No point being challenged unless we're going to do something about it! No, I've made up my mind, whatever the cost, I'm going for God!"

So proud

I was so proud of him. Actually, I'm not really supposed to use that word – 'proud' – because ... **'Pride comes before a fall'; 'God resists the proud'; 'Behold every one that is proud, and abase him'; 'Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low'; 'The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things; him that has a high look and a heart will not I suffer'; 'Though the Lord be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knows afar off'; 'The Lord will destroy the house of the proud'; 'Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord'; 'For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low' ...** Have I convinced you?

Nevertheless, I was really blessed to see Maurice change, not because I was pushing him, but because the Lord was now doing it. I can't tell you how blessed I felt that at last God was going to manipulate Maurice so that **he** could be **the man** and lead **me**.

I'd waited for so long and I could only see this change as positive. What I didn't realise, of course, was that Maurice was really catching up to me in the things he was doing. I had gone full time long before, so he wasn't actually challenging or leading

me, and because of this I felt very comfortable with the changes that were taking place in him.

It was when we got married and had our first child that the impact of that vision really hit me. And it wasn't pleasant at all.

A new hair-cut

For a period our little boy came between us as I was preoccupied with my new baby who always seemed to want my attention at exactly the same moment Maurice wanted it. He demanded so much of my time and energy. I was no longer available twenty-four-seven for Maurice, and he knew it. He now took second place as I attended to this vulnerable little child. Maurice felt pushed out and resented it. Because he couldn't talk to me without my being distracted he began to talk to others about the revelation he was getting from God. I felt as though I had lost my best friend and prayer partner.

Of course, it was all good, and of God, but the cutting of the hair – the separation we experienced – was extremely painful and bewildering for both of us.

But I have learned that **God allows what he hates, to achieve what he loves.** He wanted to be Maurice's God, his only God, and didn't want him to have any other props. He had to get me out of the way for Maurice to have the right relationship

with him. Now, because I am in the position where I support and uphold my husband instead of it being the other way round as it was before, the relationship with God is right and we have order in the home.

My husband now receives direction personally from God how to lead his family and I am happy to come under my husband. He is my covering. In all matters the most important thing, where decision making is concerned, is unity. If there is something Maurice wants to do which I feel differently about, even in matters of praying to God in faith for something, I have decided that unity must be maintained at all costs for God will not listen to either of us if we don't have it. If Maurice can't see the problem from my point of view, then always I will come under him. God is not the author of confusion, my 'head' will have to answer to God for wrong decisions.

Quality material

I must emphasise at this point that I was working with good material. My husband wanted God deep down even though the world had a tremendous pull on him. He wanted the same things everyone else wants: fame, wealth, privacy, independence ... and did everything he could think of to attain these things. But God could see what was in the depth of his heart and allowed me to partner up with him. I waited until I was thirty-seven years old for the man of God's choice for me and I know, without a

shadow of a doubt, that he gave me Maurice. If God put us together then we have an obligation to get it right, because God knows perfection is achievable.

Meek spirit

I know of another woman whose Christian husband had been a firebrand, preaching and witnessing unrelentingly for the Lord, but for some reason God allowed him to fall from grace into sin. For years he would come home in the small hours of the morning with lipstick on the collars of his shirts, smelling of women's perfume. He drank until he was inebriated, and emotionally abused his wife, and did his best to make her leave and divorce him. But she wouldn't. She would wash his lipstick, stained clothes; cook his meals; maintain the home; and pray for him. She wouldn't fight with him, and for ten long years she took her tears and prayers to the Lord.

The man was tormented – no backslider is at peace when they are away from God. But somehow, in his own way, God restored this man's faith and marriage. His wife's prayerful meek and quiet spirit had won him back to loving her and when he died, some years later, he was in his own bed cuddling his own wife.

A gem

On the other hand I knew a really godly man who worked with us for the space of twenty years.

Such a brother was so very rare, he was a gem being polished by the Lord. Everywhere he went people spoke well of him remarking on the fact that such a talented man had the ability to serve. He had totally committed himself to God, was humble, full of integrity, absolutely trustworthy, and had decided to live a life of celibacy until God changed his lifestyle.

My husband, Maurice, and I trained him up, brought him into the ministry, and sent him to other countries to represent Barratt Ministries. He had even learned to live by faith and trust God for all his needs like we did. Of course he had no financial commitments as the expenses of Barratt Ministries were our responsibility, but he looked to God to provide him with clothes and holidays, and God always looked after him.

He won our complete confidence. When Maurice and I were out on ministry we would leave him in charge of our three small children with absolute peace in our hearts knowing that if something happened to us to prevent us from returning, they were in the safest hands possible. He earned our deepest love and respect, and our children saw him as part of the family.

Crunchy maple leaf

For twenty years Maurice and I had waited for a vision regarding a crunchy maple leaf falling to the ground and causing an explosion to be fulfilled.

Obviously, when you are given a vision from the Lord you don't always know fully how it is going to work out practically, but we felt it had something to do with Canada. So when a Canadian couple who had seen and heard us minister in a church in Manchester asked us if we would minister in their country we took this as God beginning to work the vision out and went to Canada. Many doors opened to us, we not only spoke in house groups and churches, but were also interviewed on radio and television.

God sets the scene

One of the young boys who had been greatly affected by my testimony at a youth meeting asked his mother, a Chinese woman who had been widowed for the previous ten years, to invite Maurice and me, and the couple who were hosting us, to dinner. During the meal God suddenly came upon me and I prophesied over the dinner table and told the woman (whom I had met for the first time) that God had called her to a different lifestyle than the one she was leading at present – a life of sacrifice and faith. She later revealed to me that she had been 'rebuking this in the name of Jesus' under her breath as I was speaking. We all knew God was there in the midst of us for his presence was so strong.

When we were back in England I received an e-mail from her asking if it would be possible for her and her two children to come to our house for a retreat within the next few weeks as it was still their summer vacation.

I knew in my spirit that this was no ordinary request, God was at work. I spoke with Maurice and told him I thought God was sending her to be a wife for the man who worked with us, as God had been preparing us with visions and prophesies during recent months. Maurice felt exactly the same. The woman also knew why she was coming – for her future husband – as God had directed her to his profile and teaching on our web site; but she was waiting for God to reveal it to him. We didn't breath a word of this to the man we just waited to see what God would do.

During her stay with us she went to some of the house group meetings with Maurice, but on other occasions went with the man who was working with us as when Maurice's teachings had come to an end he followed up with further studies of a different nature. On these occasions she was alone with him whilst they travelled but he was totally unaware of her, as a woman, or her mission. As the two weeks stay with us neared to an end she confided to us that she didn't think he knew what a woman was!

The penny drops

Two evenings before her flight back to Canada the woman had gone to a house group meeting with Maurice and me was in the garden with my children. This man came out to sit with us and we got into conversation. He had been thinking strange things. Eventually he came to the conclusion that God had sent this woman to be his wife. "Go and get her, then!" I said.

He was forty nine years old but was giggling incredulously like a little boy. If God had gone to all the trouble of preparing a Chinese woman and bringing her to him all the way from Canada, then nothing could be easier. He would ask her to marry him the very next morning so that they could make the necessary arrangements before she returned home the day after.

True to his word, at the very earliest opportunity he knocked on her door and asked her two questions, the first being, “The Lord has shown me that you are to be my wife, will you marry me?” She said she would. But then he said, “Will you come to live with me at Barratt Ministries for this is where the Lord has called me?”

She hadn’t anticipated this question so there was quite a bit of deliberation. He was asking her to sell up her house in Canada, leave her mother, relatives, church and friends, and bring her two children to live in a house shared by other people, and to live by faith. Now this was different ... She was an accountant by profession! She couldn’t get her head around how he was going to provide for her and her kids and asked him endless questions about our finances and the way we operated.

Tsunami

At last she agreed to this question also, but told a friend of hers, who was also a friend of mine,

that she would go along with him for a year or two then move into their own place. Her sister-in-law, who came over to England for the wedding, shared with me the family joke that her nickname was ‘Tsunami’!

From the moment she agreed to his terms the man changed. The carefree, happy man became fearful and burdened. He lost his appetite and within a few months lost around forty pounds. Retreating into himself he became hard to communicate with and I was really concerned for his health. On the one occasion I got through to him he shared his fears saying he could understand David when he talked of the ‘terrors’ that had come upon him in the Psalms, that horror had overwhelmed him. He wasn’t afraid of marriage; he was afraid of this woman for she was too strong for him. The worst thing was that he wasn’t in love with her, he was marrying her because God had told him to.

Ambitious lady

He became a puppet in her hands. She was ambitious and manipulated him easily because he had a servant heart and knew how to please. They were married within six months of meeting and she managed, unbelievably, to turn his heart away from us completely. They left Barratt Ministries after just two months. The week following he sent us a five page, type written letter (hers was nine pages long) giving the reasons why he had left, saying that he

realised now that for twenty years we had misused and abused him.

God had intended for him to be a man. To marry and be a leader in his household. But she was the one who was wearing the trousers from the day he ‘popped the question’.

Chapter 7

Rebekah

The story of Isaac and Rebecca coming together is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. The circumstances of their marriage is so romantic it is almost like a fairy tale ...

Servant commissioned

After Sarah, his wife, had been dead for three years, Abraham felt that it was time for his son, Isaac to be married, as he was now forty years old. So he commissioned the eldest servant, who ruled over all his house, to go in search of a bride and bring her back for him. He specifically told him not to look for a girl from amongst the Canaanites, where he was living, but to go back to his own country, his own

people, and take a suitable woman from there. The servant swore to Abraham that he would follow all his instructions, and after preparing ten camels with gifts and provisions, went to the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia, where Abraham had come from, and prayed to the Lord for guidance.

O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray you, send me good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down your pitcher, I pray you, that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give your camels drink also: let the same be she that you have appointed for your servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that you have showed kindness unto my master.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Milcah, the wife of Nahor Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray you, drink a little water from your pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink,

she said, I will draw water for your camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hurried, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran Drink, my Lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hurried, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her held his peace, waiting to see whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

Genesis 24:12-21

Divine appointment

The servant could hardly believe what had just taken place. No sooner had he said the prayer and made the suggestion to God about what should be the sign, than it happened, and God sent a young virgin to him. She was not only beautiful, but she was also extremely ready and willing to put herself out for a stranger who had ten thirsty camels to water, and that in itself showed the calibre of this young maiden.

The servant took jewellery and gold from the bags which had been loaded onto his camels to pay her for her hard work. He then asked whose daughter she was and whether there would be any room in her father's house to lodge him, the men who had come with him, and his camels. He had

travelled far and was not going to miss this God given opportunity.

I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

Genesis 24:24-25

The Lord not only answered his brief prayer immediately, but he had just witnessed a miracle, for the Lord had brought him straight to Abraham's brother Nahor's household. He bowed his head and worshipped.

Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

Genesis 24:26-27

Isaac gets his bride

The servant explained his mission to the family and Rebekah agreed to go with him the following morning to become the wife of a man she had only heard about from a total stranger. Abraham's servant had been a wonderful ambassador for his master – he was taking home God's choice.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for

he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Genesis 24:61-67

Two nations

This was the one. She was perfect and had been singled out for him by God. It is, therefore, quite amazing that as Isaac was the son of promise to Abraham, God had chosen a woman for him who was, in fact, barren. I find it amazing that with every plan of God there are hurdles to overcome. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah and for the next twenty years he intreated God to open her womb. When God was finally entreated and allowed Rebekah to conceive she had terrible complications in her pregnancy. She was in such pain that she enquired of God why this was so, and God spoke to her:

And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from your bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Genesis 25:23

We must remember here that God had spoken directly to Rebekah. She was the one who was going through this trial; she was the one enquiring of the Lord; and it was to her he gave the answer, which was indeed a prophecy, a promise of what was to come. Just like Mary, the mother of Jesus, she kept all these things locked away tightly in her heart, refusing to forget them, and waited for their fulfilment.

Laban's sister

Upon reading the way Rebekah reacted when she first met Abraham's servant – her consideration for the travellers and their camels, her willingness to be taken away from her family and country to become the wife of someone a complete stranger told her about – she gives the impression that she is a sweet, compliant, godly girl, and so she may well have been. But it would do well to remember she had come from the same parents as her notorious brother Laban! We are all products of our environment, and it is easy to see what sort of family background she had when we observe the way her brother treated Jacob later on.

Isaac must have been convinced that he was nearing the end of his life and so felt the need to set his house in order before he met his Maker. Rebekah overheard Isaac talking with Esau, the elder son, about passing on the blessing, and immediately alarm bells started ringing. What about the promise she had received when she was pregnant? Had Isaac completely forgotten what God had said to her? She knew Isaac had put all his energies into training Esau, but because of what God had said she loved Jacob and knew that it was his divine right to receive the blessing as God had, in his own wisdom, and for his own reasons, reversed the order. Quickly she ran off to put her proposal to Jacob.

Behold I heard your father speak unto Esau your brother, saying, bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless you before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you.

Genesis 27:6

Trickery

Rebekah than told Jacob to bring her a couple of kids from the flock and she would make the meal that Isaac was asking for so that Jacob could take it to him and get the blessing his brother Esau should have received. Jacob was worried because he could see obvious complications – Esau was a hairy man whilst he was smooth; his father might be

blind but he would know it wasn't Esau if he heard and touched him. Rebekah would not listen to his objections, she could handle it, she had everything under control. Hastily she dressed him in Esau's clothing so that he smelled like his brother, and put the skins of the kids upon the backs of his hands and the smooth of his neck to fool her husband.

She could see Jacob was scared of what would happen if his father 'smelled a rat' and caught him red-handed trying to steal what wasn't his. He knew he was pushing his luck because already he had cheated his brother out of his birthright when he made him promise to give it him in exchange for a bowl of porridge when he was famished. His father would not bless him if he caught him in the act of deception, rather he would curse him and his fate would be worse than if he had just left things as they were.

Lack of faith

But Rebekah wasn't going to let this opportunity pass. She took matters into her own hands and told Jacob that if Isaac did find out and cursed him, then the curse would be upon her own head and Jacob would be free. So desperate was she to see her favoured son receive the blessing that she was willing to be cursed. If she hadn't been so deceitful she could have sounded like Moses, or Paul!

Women are much more devious than men. They use their instincts and cunning, not their brawn, to manipulate. Rebekah was prepared to run the risk of

being cursed herself if only she could see her son blessed. Rebekah's plan worked and Jacob duped his father, thus swindling his brother yet again.

Oh Rebekah, Rebekah, what were you thinking of when you talked Jacob into cheating his father? Why didn't you set your son a godly example that would help him in his future life by showing him that God could be trusted to bring about his promises without your interference and trickery? You left your old life, your biological family environment, with all its conniving, swindling ways and false gods, twenty years ago.

But perhaps the fear of all God had promised coming to naught after she had believed for all those years made her forget that she was now in a secure family, serving a God who had spoken to her, with whom she now had her own personal relationship. She may have left her biological family, but their genes were still a part of her make up; and the devil was only too eager to entice her to fall back into that life style when her faith began to slip.

Be careful little eyes

Mothers, it's important that you understand what influence you have on your children. For all the years they are with you those little penetrating eyes are watching you and see everything. You may think they are only taking notice of what you tell them, but they see your actions, your attitudes, your resentments,

the outbursts, and silent contempt, everything. Their experience of life is not the same as yours so very often they don't understand why you do the things you do. But be assured of this, they will copy you, they are your reflection. They will not only copy your good points, but very often they will embarrass you by exposing what you try to hide. To know what the home situation is like you only have to observe the children.

Chapter 8

Delilah

The story of Samson is one of the saddest I have read in the whole Bible, and I could cry when I think of the way he was so abused by the women he loved. I have often heard sermons slandering the character of Samson, preachers insult him by saying he had a problem with women and was a womaniser.

I actually think they do this man a great injustice and have not read the scripture with any measure of understanding. He is even listed amongst the 'cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 11:32 whom we are to read about for inspiration and look to as examples of faith. A more indepth study will show an unbiased person a different story.

Chosen vessel

When the angel came to Samson's barren mother to tell her that she would conceive and bear a son, he made it very clear that this was no ordinary child. She was told to ...

... Drink no wine or strong drink, to eat nothing unclean, and not to allow a razor to come upon his head, for this child would be a Nazarite to God **from the womb to the day of his death**, and he would begin to deliver his people from the Philistines.

Judges 13:4-5

Honourable request

Samson's first recorded encounter with a female was when he had spotted a young Philistine woman in Timnath and wanted his parents to get her for him to wife. This, in actual fact, was a very honourable request. He wasn't sleeping around having affairs. In fact, the only objection his parents had was the fact that she was a Philistine and not a Jewess.

Is there not a woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?

Judges 14:3

There must have been many beautiful women amongst the Israelites, but none of them appealed to Samson. They weren't to his taste. We are not all the same, some people prefer mates from different countries. It adds to their mystery perhaps. Samson's parents were very distressed because it was against their law for Israelites to marry foreigners, and they had taken every care to bring him up as a Nazarite to God. They certainly didn't realise that this dissatisfaction had been placed in his heart by the Lord because he was picking a fight.

Picking a fight

But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that **he sought an occasion against the Philistines:** for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Judges 14:4

Samson courted the young woman, fell in love with her, and made arrangements to marry her. But it was during the actual wedding festivities that the fight occurred. On the very first day of his wedding celebrations Samson set forth a riddle for the thirty Philistine guests to solve. He agreed that if they worked out the answer at the end of the seven day feast he would give each of them a sheet and a change of clothes. If, on the other hand, they couldn't solve the riddle, then they would have to give him thirty sheets and thirty changes of clothes. That was fair!

The Philistines accepted the challenge but grew very anxious when they realised they couldn't solve the riddle. They threatened Samson's new bride saying that unless she found out the answer and told them, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. Obviously, the young woman was terrified and did her best to find the answer, but Samson wasn't giving anything away. She wept before him the whole seven days saying, "How can you say you love me when you won't tell me the answer?"

Betrayed by his wife

On the seventh day she had completely worn him down with her tears and pleas so he told her the answer. She immediately told the Philistines who in turn told Samson. He had been betrayed by his new bride, the woman he loved, and was being taken advantage of. He was so angry that he went out and killed thirty Philistines, took their spoil, and gave their clothes to those who had expounded the riddle; and was so angry because he had been manipulated so easily that he went back to live with his parents.

Betrayed by his father-in-law

Samson was not a hard man. It wasn't long before he thought things through, softened up again making excuses for his wife, and went to visit her at her father's house with a kid as a peace

offering, only to be stopped in his tracks. The girl's father had assumed that Samson would by now have hated the girl so he had given her to Samson's companion! He then offered Samson her younger sister ... whom he said was fairer! How could this be? Surely his father-in-law could understand his need for a little space to get over the pain of his new wife exposing him to her Philistine countrymen at their very wedding feast? He had been hurt, yes; but now he was over it and had forgiven her, having considered it as being nothing more than a lovers spat. To give her to his companion without even asking Samson how he felt about her now was totally unreasonable, unjustified, and uncalled for.

Now Samson was angry! Really angry! So angry that he destroyed all the Philistine crops using foxes to run through the fields with burning brands tied to their knotted tails. This experience of being betrayed by someone he really loved hurt him so deeply he didn't touch women again for at least twenty years, during which time he was a judge in Israel. Samson, to me, comes across as a very passionate, emotional man in search of someone who will passionately love him back. I can feel the hurt, frustration and disappointment in all his actions.

The Bible doesn't seem to hide any of Samson's encounters with the opposite sex. Even one night stands are recorded for it tells us of the brief fling he had with a harlot in Gaza.

Picking another fight

Shortly after this he met his Goliath ... Delilah! She bewitched him for he fell head over heels in love with her. She didn't love him, this was completely one sided. His need of her was so great that he didn't even realise she didn't love him. Once the Philistines got wind that Samson was seeing her they put out the bait.

Entice him, see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind and afflict him: and we will give you, every one of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver.

Judges 16:5

That was some bait! Samson was as soft as putty in the hands of this woman. She was an expert seductress and manipulated him so well she could wrap him around her little finger. It seems crazy to me that Samson didn't see what she was doing. But God was picking another fight with the Philistines, and allowed Samson to be blinded and overpowered yet again by love.

Love of money

What a malicious, wicked, evil woman Delilah was. She knew the Philistines just wanted to overpower him so that they could kill him, yet she plotted with them. Samson may have been weak where love was

concerned, but she was ambitious, greedy, and very covetous. The Bible states that the love of money is the root of all evil. How true, for the silver the Philistines had promised blinded her to the fact that here was a super strong man, who loved so deeply that he was willing to devote himself to her. She was callous and abused his love for her own, selfish gain.

Samson tested

Three times she put him to the test by getting him to tell her how he could be overcome, actually trying it out on him, then when she said the Philistines were here to get him he would break free without a struggle. Why could he not see? How deeply this man must have loved her. How desperate was he to want to believe she loved him too, that he had nothing to fear from her? How deceived can a man who is passionately in love be?

And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, "There has not come a razor upon my head; for **I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb**: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

Judges 16:16-17

This story is actually a testimony as to what kind of true Israelite Samson was. He never fought or

strayed from his calling as a Nazarite and stayed true to God his entire life. He knew in his spirit there was a purpose for him to fulfil and made many enemies doing God's will.

But when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he has shown me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came and brought money in their hand. And she made Samson sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon you, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he didn't even realise that the Lord was departed from him.

Judges 16:17-20

Delilah destroyed Samson

The fact that she applied the razor to his head didn't only rob him of his strength, she broke his heart. He must have been devastated and full of confusion as the realisation of what had taken place stripped him of any faith he had left in women. His relationship with Delilah was immediately cut off; but worse still ... God had left him!

By the flattery of their tongue, or the seduction of their bodies, ungodly, covetous women can get what

they want. They can even bring down, and destroy, extremely powerful men.

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou should ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that you can not know them. Hear me now therefore, O you children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.

Proverbs 5:3-8

Chapter 9

Solomon

What a wonderful start Solomon had. He was the child born to David and Bathsheba whom God loved.

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him.

2 Samuel 12:24

And of all my sons, said David, (for the Lord had given me many sons) God has chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon your son, he shall build my house and

my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. Now, therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God: that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. And you, Solomon my son, get to know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts: if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. ... And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with you; he will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 28:5-10 & 20

God gave David the promise that this child, Solomon, would be his successor. Solomon was God's choice out of all the sons David had sired. Knowing this, David poured all his passion for God, wisdom, and experience into this child to prepare him for what was expected of him. Solomon was

conceived in purity. It wasn't lust or sexual appetite which drove him and Bathsheba to become one. No, they were both grieving and hurting from the pain of God taking the child born to them from their adulterous relationship. It was love fuelled by pain that drove them together, David desperately wanting to comfort his dearly loved wife, this beautiful woman for whom he had caused so much grief. Their spirits, not only their bodies, became one during this act, and Bathsheba bore their love in the form of their child, Solomon. No wonder God loved him. David cherished this boy.

Give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

1 Chronicles 29:19

This was the prayer he prayed to the God he both loved and served. David knew all about the law of God – Psalm 119 shows his adoration of God's wisdom in his laws, commandments, testimonies, statutes, precepts, and words. He would surely, most surely have educated Solomon in these.

I, therefore, find it very strange that Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh King of Egypt, married his daughter, and brought her into the city of David before he had built his own house, and the house of the Lord. 1 Kings 3:3 states that Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father:

only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. He knew the place to sacrifice was in Gibeon, and indeed when he did go there to sacrifice God met him and appeared to him in a dream.

God appears to Solomon

In Kings we read a strange scripture. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream during the night and asked him what he should give him. Solomon was in a very awkward situation. He was taking over the throne and rule of his people from the very king God had chosen and anointed ... a man after God's own heart who fulfilled God's will in every way.

... and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

Acts 13:22

... and Solomon felt completely out of his depth. He told God that he was completely lacking in experience and didn't know how to rule the people which had become a vast multitude.

Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this your so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.

1 Kings 3:9

Solomon was asking permission to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that he could make wise decisions out of his own mind and heart without having to consult God all the time. But even with this concession God put in the proviso that if this power didn't go to Solomon's head, and he walked in his ways and statutes and commandments as his father David had done, then he would lengthen his days also.

God was well aware of what power could do to men and made sure that he had already given instructions of how kings should conduct themselves once they had been appointed.

When you have come unto the land which the LORD your God gives you, and shall possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; you shall in any wise set him king over you, whom the LORD your God shall choose: one from among your brethren shall you set king over you: you may not set a stranger over you, which is not your brother. but he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD has said unto you, You shall henceforth return no more that way. **Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:** neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. and it shall be, when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, that **he shall write him a copy of this law in a**

book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

David, Solomon's father, loved the law of God greatly and followed it with his whole heart. David most definitely would have made Solomon fully aware of what was written in the law and what was expected of him when he became king.

I find it incredible that Solomon, the very man who was blessed more than any other man before him with wisdom and understanding, did not take God seriously. Having the freedom to make his own decisions based on the fact that he was blessed with this wonderful wisdom from God, Solomon ignored the limitations placed upon him in every single area. He broke every rule. This type of rebellion will always lead us to do what we think is best for our own flesh.

Breaking the rules

He took to himself foreign wives and concubines who brought their gods with them. He was besotted

with these women, they made him feel so good. He gave in to their demands because he knew that to indulge and pamper them would make them happier in his vast harem. Yes, it was very important that all those women were happy!

But King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, you shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their Gods: Solomon clave unto these in love, and he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old that **his wives turned away his heart after other gods:** and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

1 Kings 11:1-4

These women taught Solomon their ways. He built houses for them, and temples for their gods, and allowed them to worship and offer sacrifices in Israel; polluting the land for the sake of keeping his women sweet. He even ended up participating in their rituals to keep them happy, and they ensnared him. He blatantly tempted God with his lawlessness and, to his detriment, God allowed him to become a fool.

God placed in Solomon's heart wisdom he hadn't learned for himself. Some of us can listen to counsel and act upon the advice we've been given, but most of us have to learn through our own bitter experiences. Jesus learned obedience through the things he suffered, but Solomon was given what he asked for without suffering. It was handed to him on a plate!

How very blessed and honoured he was to be treated by God in this way, yet it seems that Solomon despised this gift. He didn't want to accept God's word on everything, he wanted to find out for himself whether what he knew to be right in his heart was, in fact, true!

Searching

My eldest son, Nathan, who delights to study the Bible, just recently began to look at the book of Ecclesiastes, but I was quite alarmed to see the profound effect it had on him. He walked around the house in a depressed manner and kept saying that everything was worthless. There was no point in living as all we can enjoy is the labour of our hands each moment. We can't even look at what we've achieved and take pleasure from it for all is vanity and of no value. Even the wealth we've managed to accumulate is handed down to someone who may squander it.

After applying his heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, Solomon came to this conclusion and wrote in Ecclesiastes that he

considered everything to be vanity – worthless, futile. He appeared to be totally disillusioned with life in general, and became a very frustrated, unhappy man.

Behold, this have I found, said the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: which yet my soul seeks, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; **but a woman among all those have I not found.** Lo, this only have I found, that God has made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.

Ecclesiastes 7:27-29

Poor old Solomon. What a tragic situation he was in. The one man in Israel who was able to take his pick of all the women he encountered, made some extremely poor choices and was disillusioned by every one of them. He couldn't find a single woman who was upright. But then this fool ignored God and looked in all the wrong places.

I'm certain of one thing, if Solomon had not been so indulgent with himself and had kept to the commandments God had instructed for kings, things would have been different for him. He could very easily have been directed to the right woman from amongst God's people.

Chapter 10

Jezebel

Solomon's relationships with his many foreign, false god worshipping, wives and concubines had caused him to allow evil practices into the land, which the Israelites were only too eager to follow, and this had provoked God to great anger. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, reigned after Solomon died but God decided to step in to show his people how much they had sinned.

One day the prophet Ahijah was alone in a field with Jeroboam, a mighty man of valour, whom Solomon had made ruler over the house of Joseph. Ahijah tore his garment into twelve peices then told Jeroboam to take ten of the twelve because God was going to tear the kingdom out of the hand of

Solomon and give ten of the twelve tribes to him, and only leave two tribes to Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The reason for God's drastic action was that Israel had forsaken him, and worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Cehmosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and had not walked in his ways, to do that which was right in his eyes, and to keep his statutes and judgments, as did David, Solomon's father.

Rehoboam had neither been blessed with wisdom like his father, nor would he listen to wise counsel, so because the majority of the Israelites refused to be ruled by him there was a terrible split in the kingdom. As Ahijah had prophesied, two tribes stayed loyal to king Rehoboam and remained in the south, forming the Southern Kingdom (Judah), but the other ten tribes asked Jeroboam, to be their king and head the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

Insecure

Jeroboam became very insecure. He realised the people needed to visit Jerusalem to sacrifice in the house of the Lord. Jeroboam feared their hearts would turn again to Rehoboam, and kill him.

Whereupon the king took counsel, and made **two calves of gold**, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: **behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt**. And he set the one

in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, **and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.** And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, **sacrificing unto the calves that he had made:** and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, **even in the month which he had devised of his own heart;** and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

I Kings 1:28-33

After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. and this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

1 Kings 13:33-34

How stupid! God had miraculously given Jeroboam ten tribes to reign over when he was a comparative nobody – an officer in the army, yet he couldn't trust God in this matter. Now that he wasn't

taking instructions from God he began to devise things out of his own heart, causing Israel to sin, and he himself became one of the priests of the high places, which was an absolute insult to the order God had established. God was really angry with Jeroboam and spoke through his prophet, Athijah, again.

...I exalted you from among the people, and made you prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it you: and yet you have not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in my eyes; **but have done evil above all that were before thee:** for you have gone and made you other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and have cast me behind your back: therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam.

1 Kings 14:7-9

Ahab

God dealt sternly with Jeroboam. There was a succession of kings after him who did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the sins of Jeroboam, but when Ahab became king he took it up a level and seemed to really overstep the mark.

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. and it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him

to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that **he took to wife Jezebel** the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, **and went and served Baal, and worshipped him**, and he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

1 Kings 16:30-33

Ahab continued walking in the same manner as Jeroboam, but there was one great difference. Jeroboam had presented the golden calves to the people saying that they were the gods that had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. In his mind they were symbolic of the real thing. But to rear up an altar to Baal, and to worship and serve Baal, was to directly oppose God.

Ethbaal (meaning 'with Baal'), king of the Zidonians, was also said to have been a priest of Astarte, whose worship was closely allied to Baal, and this probably would account for his daughter Jezebel's zeal in promoting idolatry in Israel. When Elijah the prophet pronounced that there would be no rain until he said it would rain, Jezebel went on a rampage and tried to destroy all the prophets of the Lord in Israel. The spirit that was in her was not the same as was in Delilah, for she had just been covetous for the wealth she could obtain from delivering Samson to his enemies. No, Jezebel had a

murderous spirit in her, which wanted to stamp out the name of God in Israel and set up a new world order. She wanted all God's people to serve and worship Baal, and if they refused she was prepared to kill them.

If it hadn't been for Obadiah, one of Ahab's governors who feared God greatly, she would have slaughtered every prophet in the land, but he had hidden in a cave one hundred of the Lord's prophets and nourished them with bread and water.

Jezebel thwarted

Jezebel was no ordinary woman. She was a powerful woman in a powerful position who had absolutely no conscience. With great zeal and fervour she promoted Baal worship in Israel.

During the great famine when there had been no crops, due to the pronouncement that there would be no rain by Elijah, four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of the groves had been catered for at Jezebel's own table. They were under her protection because her mission was to stamp out the name of God in Israel. Anyone who dared to ignore her threats and speak for the God of Israel were in peril of losing their lives.

She must have felt very confident indeed when Elijah threw out his challenge to the Baal worshippers

to see who was the real God, for it appears that she didn't even join the throng. To her mind there were no more prophets of Jehovah left in the land save Elijah, he was just one lone voice in the wilderness, what could he do? So she remained out of the way leaving her prophets to sort him out and win the battle.

Ahab had witnessed everything and came home with the news, but when he relayed it to Jezebel she was mortified at the outcome of the contest. Not only did Elijah prove that his God was the real one who answered with fire by burning up the sacrifice which he had absolutely sodden with barrels of water, but he also had all her prophets killed with the sword. To top it all he had prayed to his God for the long, three year drought to cease, and it had suddenly poured with rain!

This was just too much. She was in danger of losing her reputation and hard earned respect. Jezebel was absolutely furious. Hatred burned in her heart toward Elijah as she determined that this would go no further. People would see how she dealt with those who blatantly opposed her authority.

Immediately she sent a messenger to Elijah threatening, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time!" She was furious, and Elijah was fully aware that her threat was not empty words. She meant what she said – she would kill him if it was the last thing she did.

Elijah was afraid. Who wouldn't have been? Jezebel was no mere woman. She was evil through and through. She hated God and everything he stood for, and she would do everything she promised unless God intervened. Elijah had just dealt with eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal with no qualms because God had instructed him what to do. The problem was, God had not given him any assurances regarding Jezebel. To slay all those false prophets only to be destroyed by a woman was more than he could cope with. He ran into the wilderness and begged God to take his life rather than this happen.

Elijah no fool

Never believe what the preachers, who would make you to believe Elijah was afraid of a woman, say. No this is not the case. Elijah was no fool. He was afraid of none other than God. But like Jesus, he knew that he could only do what God showed him to do. He was not so stupid as to act on his own initiative. This was no ordinary woman and could not be dealt with without divine wisdom.

He could face any foe if God had told him to do so. He could face a thousand Jezebels if God just gave him the word. But God had not told him to do anything and this woman embodied everything that was contemptible and evil. To have her gloat over his death at her hands would reduce everything he had just done to be of no value. She would show herself in all Israel to be stronger than God because

she had dared to stand up to him and kill his greatest prophet.

Elijah did not run because he was afraid of her, he was afraid of her using him to cause Israel to take the name of God in vain. If she won this battle they would be back to square one and Israel would go back to worshipping false gods, and remain backslidden.

But God had not finished with Elijah. This was God's man, he was a faithful servant whom God loved and he had more work to do. Jezebel couldn't touch him, she was a mere pawn in God's hands. In fact, God didn't even think it necessary to mention her when Elijah poured his heart out about what was happening, he just nourished him with miraculous cakes and water which just appeared before him and then gave him further instructions concerning prominent people.

Before Elijah embarked on his journey, God assured him that he was not alone. God had reserved for himself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which had not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him. No, Elijah was not on his own. With renewed spirit and courage Elijah went back to work and ignored this woman, Jezebel.

Naboth's vineyard

Unfortunately, her husband Ahab could not do what Elijah had done. He was completely under her

influence and control. She was more like a mother to him for she dominated every area of his life.

Some time after the incident on Mount Carmel with the prophets, King Ahab desired the vineyard that belonged to his neighbour, Naboth, as it was right next to his own house and he wanted it for a herb garden. He assured Naboth that if he didn't want a vineyard elsewhere then he would give him the worth of it in money. But Naboth refused so Ahab went home heavy hearted and displeased because he didn't get his own way.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

1 Kings 21:4

For goodness sake! What sort of a king is this? He was actually sulking, like a little boy, because he couldn't get his own way. Naboth refused to give up his vineyard as this was the inheritance of his fathers which would be passed down to future generations, according to the law in Israel. Ahab should have understood how Naboth felt about his property, but he knew that Jezebel would sort his problems out for him as she had no respect for God's laws. He waited until she came in and then told her how Naboth had wronged him.

And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Do you not govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be merry: I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, You blasphemed God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth blasphemed God and the king.

Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he

refused to give you for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

1 Kings 21:7-16

Jezebel didn't care how she got what she wanted, she was a law unto herself. The saying goes that behind every good man is a good woman, but behind evil Ahab there was an even more evil woman who knew how to entice and get her own way no matter what the obstacle.

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom **Jezebel** his wife **stirred up**.

1 Kings 21:25

God did answer Elijah's prayer to save him from Jezebel for he took him up in a chariot of fire into heaven before she could get her murderous hands upon him. His departure from the earth was more dramatic than anything ever heard of before, because he did not taste death, he was just taken!

Before he vanished, however, God had given him the commission to anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi to be the new king. God had had enough of Ahab and his wickedness, so was starting again through a new line. Elijah was instructed to go and meet Ahab in Naboth's vineyard to prophecy how God intended

to punish him because he had sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord ...

Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisses against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith you have provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spoke the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dies in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, **whom Jezebel his wife stirred up**. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

1 Kings 21:21-26

Ahab humbles himself

When Ahab heard these words he tore his clothes, put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. This was such an unexpected turn around that God said to Elijah, "Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before me? Because of this I will not bring the evil in his

days, but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Was it possible that God could have got through to this man? Many men are more afraid of their wives than of God. I remember some years ago catching my father off guard and having a real heart to heart encounter with him where he softened and melted to the point of putting his arms around me and we both asked forgiveness for the way we had hurt each other in the past. But my mother saw us, he caught her eye and she glared at him, and that was the end of that.

Whatever Ahab was feeling at this point, Jezebel made sure it didn't last. She filled up the palace with more prophets of Baal thereby snuffing out any opportunity for the Lord God to soften his heart.

Jezebel destroyed

Ahab was killed in battle as the Lord prophesied and his son, Joram, reigned in his stead. Jehu was now on a mission to destroy the house of Ahab (as he'd been instructed by Elijah in the prophecy) and rode on horseback to Jezreel. When Joram saw him riding towards the city in the distance he rode out in his chariot to meet him, and asked if he was coming in peace. Jehu's answer filled him with fear and dread. "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are

so many?" Joram immediately turned tail and fled crying, "There is treachery!" But Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and killed him so that he sunk down in his chariot.

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

2 Kings 9:30-37

Jezebel was so used to seduction to get her own way that she painted her face before she looked out

at Jehu. That she was beautiful to look at, I have no doubt, but beauty is only skin deep. She knew how to charm, seduce, manipulate, give in order to get. She was a whore who was void of any conscience, sold to sin, with not an ounce of repentance in her. She was surrounded by people who served her, but she had earned no love, she had no friends. When given the opportunity her own body guards made haste to throw her out of the window. No, they may have served her, but they certainly did not love her; they actually hated, and wanted to be rid of her.

Alive and kicking

The spirit of Jezebel still lives on in many women today. In fact Jezebel moves around amongst us so freely that the angel of the church in Thyatira was given a warning concerning allowing her to operate without restriction in the church. She appeared to be so super spiritual with her gifts of prophecy, but she was seducing the saints, pulling them away from the real God to serve other gods. Paul said that he suffered not a woman to speak, nor to usurp men (2 Titus 2:14). But more and more women are being ordained to the ministry. More and more women are taking authority and running churches.

In many Pastors' homes the wife pursues a ministry of her own as she doesn't want to be relegated to the role of being just a support to her husband. The children are forced to decide who to follow. The family is divided – the order is wrong.

I know of a church ministers organisation where one of the main voices was a woman who had the prophetic gifting. She was on the executive board, held in very high esteem, and sent to other countries as an ambassador for them. She gathered the women who thought they had ministries and led them in conventions.

She would speak amazing things, speaking as a prophet to the nations telling of disasters, changes in governments, and all sorts of things. Sometimes she would give people the messages she had received from God for the coming year to those who asked her, and everyone marvelled at these great revelations. They were all in great awe and revered her. Yet I don't know of anyone who ever challenged her when her bold 'prophecies' didn't come to pass.

She would boldly speak out against men in authority and people would accept her without questioning, thinking she had the mind of Christ. It was because of a disagreement she had with the leader of the organisation that there was a great division and many of the members took sides and left.

Women have become very powerful in many churches, probably because more women attend church than men, but God's order has never changed.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and

sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

1 Titus 2:9-13

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because **you suffered that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.** And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have

not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which you have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Revelation 2:18-29

Chapter 11

Neordias

When God took Elijah from the earth in a chariot of fire, without having tasted death, it was because his work on earth had not yet ended. He still had things to do.

Elijah returns

The angel Gabriel made a special appearance to a righteous priest named Zacharias, whose wife was of the daughters of Aaron, with the news that God had answered his prayers and his wife would give birth to a very special child who would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb and operate in the 'spirit and power of Elijah' to make a people ready for the Lord.

This was indeed a miracle for quite apart from being advanced in years, his wife, Elisabeth, had been barren throughout their married life.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elisabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the **spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

Luke 1:13-17

The very event the children of Israel were waiting in anticipation for was now about to happen. The Messiah was on the horizon, and this child that Elisabeth was going to bear was the promised prophet who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for him.

Behold, I will send you **Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: **And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the**

children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Malachi 4:5-6

Messiah comes

Six months after Gabriel's remarkable encounter with Zacharias, Mary, a young virgin, also received a visit from him and was told that she had been chosen to bear the son of Almighty God! Gabriel is not mentioned much in the Bible, he seems to be the bearer of extraordinary messages which come directly from the throne of God. Mary was then informed by him that her cousin, Elisabeth, who was called barren, was also expecting a very special child. She was so amazed at the things Gabriel had shared with her that she decided to visit Elisabeth for herself.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Luke 1:39-41

Mary, in her pure innocence, had accepted the word of the angel and was rewarded by Elisabeth's delighted exclamation that the miraculous child she was carrying in her womb had leapt for joy when it

heard the sound of Mary's voice, causing Elisabeth, there and then, to be filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesy.

Zacharias dumb

Zacharias, on the other hand, could not believe his ears when Gabriel had given him the wonderful news that at last God was going to answer his prayer for a child. In all fairness to Zacharias, he had probably prayed for years, and now that they were both elderly people he and his wife must have given up asking. He probably felt that this was too great a responsibility anyway now. He asked Gabriel for proof that this would really happen, so because he doubted, Gabriel gave him a sign and told him that he would be dumb until everything that had been prophesied had come to pass. Zacharias did not expect a sign like this, I'm sure he was hoping for the spectacular. But, as prophesied, he remained dumb right up to the very day his promised child was being named.

And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up

in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Luke 1:62-66

The circumstances surrounding John's birth drew attention to the fact that this was no ordinary child. God had predestined him to fulfil a specific purpose. After naming his child 'John', Zacharias was also filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied what manner of child this was. He was the forerunner to the Messiah.

And you, child, shall be called **the prophet of the Highest: for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways**; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

Luke 1:76-80

It seems that John grew up in the wilderness where, thirty years later, the word of God came to him and commissioned him to preach to Israel.

...the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all

the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Luke 3:2-6

This was the very prophet Israel had been waiting for, the one who would come in the spirit of Elijah. They easily recognised that he was different by the very manner in which he presented himself, for in Mark 1:6 it shows that John was clothed with camel's hair, with a girdle of a skin about his loins; just like Elijah.

And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girded with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

2 Kings 1:8

Bold as a lion

Because John was a true prophet he spoke only what God told him to say. He'd been in the wilderness for too many years to be worried about what people thought of him. Living as a hermit he had no chance of building a reputation for nobody knew him. John did not fear men, and certainly did not mince

his words when he stared wickedness in the face. His message was, "Repent, and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins", and all Israel came to the Jordan, out in the desert, to hear what this prophet had to say. When the multitude came to be baptised by him he sternly rebuked them. He spoke to the crowds in the same way that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees.

O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and said unto them, He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

Luke 3:7-14

The fact that the Israelites were living under Roman occupation did not worry John, he was unflinching when he told them where they were at fault. Their opinion of him did not matter. In the same manner he rebuked Herod Antipas the king.

Jez ebel reappears

Herod surnamed 'Antipas,' was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace, a Samaritan woman. After the death of his father he was appointed by the Roman tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea. His first wife was the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia; but he subsequently repudiated her and took to himself Herodias, the wife of his step brother Herod Philip.

Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus and Bernice, and while residing at Rome with her husband, Herod Philip I (the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem) and her daughter, Herod Antipas fell for her during one of his journeys to that city. She consented to leave her husband and become his wife. Some time after this Herod met John the Baptist who boldly declared the marriage to be unlawful.

But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

Luke 3:19-20

Herod cast John the Baptist into prison because John had rebuked him for his unlawful connection with Herodias. Herodias was furious at this public humiliation. She would not answer to anyone, least of all to an uncouth prophet who had no respect for her person or status. In the same way that John was acting in the spirit of Elijah, so too was Herodias acting in the spirit of Jezebel, for this is the spirit of an arrogant, haughty woman, who lives by her own standards and rules and will not permit herself to be accountable to anyone, especially God Almighty.

'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' is a statement from one of Shakespeare's plays. Herodias was no woman to be antagonised. John had pressed a sore spot for he had openly called her an adulteress and, being totally unsatisfied with the mere imprisonment of John for his vile outburst, the Jezebel spirit in her wanted revenge. The problem was that her husband knew there was something uniquely righteous and holy about this man and actually enjoyed listening to him.

Herodias cunningly waited and waited until the right time to strike back at this insolent prophet. She knew her husband to be light minded, sensual and vicious, so used her own beautiful daughter to entice him. Yes, she caught Herod by seduction, and instigated John's slaughter.

Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, will teach and seduce God's servants to commit fornication by

going after other gods without any scruples. Herod knew John was righteous and just, and took notice of and did many things he said, but that spirit of Jezebel in Herodias seduced and tricked him into destroying what was pure and clean. Jezebel is always thirsty for the blood of the saints and will not rest until those who resist her are completely annihilated.

For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for you to have thy brother's wife. Therefore **Herodias had a quarrel** against him, and **would have killed him**; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever you will, and I will give it you. And he swore unto her, Whatsoever you shall ask of me, I will give it you, unto the half of my kingdom.

And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with

haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that you give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

Mark 6:17-28

Make no mistake the spirit of Jezebel lives on today; not only in the hearts of rebellious females, but also in the church – which is supposed be the Bride of Christ.

When a harlot gives birth to a baby girl, the child is innocent and pure just like any other woman's child. The fact that the child has come out of a prostitute does not automatically make the child a whore, this happens through personal choice. All moves of God in the past have been born out of pure beginnings, but once these moves become denominations where people are trying to make a name for themselves and become recognised, then this is where the corruption, Jezebel, comes in. When we compromise what is pure to please the people – entertainment in the churches, religious observances, refusal to deal with unforgiveness, etc., we allow the Body to be

contaminated and end up prostituting the church by permitting everyone, and every spirit, freedom to operate.

M other of harlots

This Jezebel spirit will counteract God's spirit at every turn unless ruthlessly dealt with.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come here; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE **MOTHER OF HARLOTS** AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman **drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:** and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Revelation 17:1-6

Once the church has compromised with the world it becomes Babylon. If I have to become a whore to witness to the prostitutes, then they have converted me. If I have to become a drunkard to witness to the drunkards they have converted me. If the church has to bring worldly music, worldly standards, worldly anything into the church so that it can witness to the world, then the world has converted the church.

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in you; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in you; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the great men of the earth; for **by your sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.**

Revelation 18:21-24

Here again we see that Jezebel spirit at work. She presents herself as beautiful, dressed in exquisite clothing, costly jewels, very desireable – decked almost like the Bride of Christ. But she leads her

victims to the pit of hell and damnation. Anyone who is not deceived by her is snuffed out. There is blood on her hands ... the blood of the saints. She is trying to sap all life from the church, and doing a fine job of it.

Stifled

I find it hard to believe my eyes and ears sometimes when I visit churches. The worship time is so choreographed and pre-planned that there is no room for the 'body' to operate. Paul said that when we met together we should all come prepared with something to share so that we can be partakers of this life together and edify one another. Instead of being a family of believers, we have become rigid and formal organisations or denominations who won't allow the spirit to have any freedom. We are the body of Christ, and members in particular, but there is no room left in our church meetings for anyone to share what God has given to them. I dare say that if Jesus Christ walked in to one of our services in person, we would still carry on with the 'service' and book him to speak some time in the future ... that is, of course, if he'd been well recommended by a good source!

... when ye come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:26

Spirit silenced

I remember being in a meeting when a young man spoke very strongly in tongues. The strength of the spirit behind his tongue was enough to put the fear of God into anyone. I heard people around me gasping, saying, "Speak Lord!" Some people actually got on their knees as they felt the presence of God – or something – so strongly.

There was silence for approximately fifteen seconds before somebody started up a chorus which didn't catch on, then the person leading the 'worship' from the platform said that we should carry on with the service and take up an offering. Suddenly the same young man jumped to his feet and the spirit of God spoke fiercely through him, saying words to this effect, "When will you allow God in the church? Why do you continually stifle the spirit of God?" I can't remember the words precisely, but I know that what was being said was exactly the way I was feeling.

Of course, this didn't go down well as the Pastor had to defend those he'd placed in position on the platform. He stood up immediately saying that there were conflicting spirits at work in the meeting. Well, yes, that's exactly what the prophetic word was saying, but he didn't say which spirit was right.

Everyone was fully awake now, God had certainly stirred something up. Unfortunately, it was the young

man who was told to exercise some self control, and I felt so sad that even God couldn't break through the continual boredom of the meetings.

Heretics

There have been some who have managed to cut through and be heard above all the religious voices, but they have ended up being branded as heretics. John Wesley, who is remembered with great admiration today for all the churches he founded and the hymns he wrote, was actually thrown out of the very denomination he tried to help because his message was not accepted. There were even times when he suffered persecution at the hands of those he tried to teach. He spent his life sharing the revelation God had given to him, at great cost to himself, travelling on horseback from town to town preaching on average five times per day over a period of sixty years. If that isn't denying the flesh, taking up the cross, and following Christ, then I don't know what is!

But often that Jezebel spirit is not content to just persecute or excommunicate, there are countless thousands who have been martyred because they would not go with the flow and become part of the 'system'. Even today in many countries around the world, radical Christianity is being hunted and crushed whilst we sit in our comfortable churches, singing our nice songs. The whore, Jezebel, has lulled and seduced the majority of professing Christians

with her sorceries, they indulge in the flesh and pamper to their senses watching on their television screens, and reading sometimes in their church news bulletins, the pain and suffering that others in the world go through, yet don't lift a finger to help.

One day that woman Jezebel, **and all her daughters** who have followed her example throughout history, Herodias being one of them, will face God Almighty and be punished.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay**, says the Lord.

Romans 12:19

Chapter 12

Esther

Esther – what a story! I must say that I think Esther is one of the most, if not the most, remarkable women I’ve ever read about in the Bible.

A nobody

Esther had been raised by Mordecai, her cousin, because she was orphaned when a child. She and her cousin had been captured, along with others who were living in Judah, and carried away to Babylon.

She was a nobody, a foreigner, living in a land where she didn’t belong, and for fear of her true identity being discovered when she, and many other beautiful virgins were summoned to the palace,

Mordecai felt it wise to change her name from 'Hadasseh', which was her Jewish name, to 'Esther', which was a Babylonian name, and charged her not to let anyone know she was a Jew, as the Jews were despised, enslaved people.

It must have been terrifying for Esther to be taken from her cousin as she was potentially walking into a hornets nest with no other Jews around to advise and encourage her!

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were suitable to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. Esther had not shown her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Esther 2:8-11

We have here one of the most beautiful women that could be found throughout the whole kingdom

encompassing twenty seven provinces. Many women had been brought to the palace to be prepared for, and then presented to the king. They were all dealt with in the same manner with no expense spared, and each one of these beauties received treatment fit for a queen as that was exactly what each one could potentially end up becoming.

Esther had been brought up well by her cousin, Mordecai, and it seems from reading the scripture that she obtained favour with those assigned to taking care of her for they preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

Chosen vessel

Esther was chosen, above all those singled out and pampered, to become the queen of Persia and Media. King Ahasuerus reigned from India to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty seven provinces, he was the most powerful man in the then known world. Her compatriots were kept in the king's harem and indulged lavishly, but after one meeting with the king Esther had won his heart. The king loved Esther, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti, his first wife, whom he had divorced because of her rebellion.

Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and

he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts,
according to the state of the king.

Esther 2:15-18

Out of all the stories in the Bible this, for me, is the ultimate story of femininity and vulnerability. We must remember that the vacancy for a queen had arisen because the king's first wife, Vashti, had publicly defied him and refused to do as he asked. Because the king's wife was rebellious, and he seemed unable to control her, he was advised by his counsellors to divorce her and take another bride who was more worthy as an example to women everywhere that they were to reverence and fear their own husbands. The counsellors were worried that if the common women were to find out how the queen behaved towards her husband, the king, then they would follow suit and treat their own husbands with similar defiance.

Obeying the commandments

Some time after Esther had been crowned the king promoted Haman, the Agagite, and advanced him above all the princes that were with him. Everyone bowed and revered Haman, for the king had commanded that this should be so. But Mordecai would neither bow, nor give him reverence. When the officials asked why he acted in this way he told them that he was a Jew and would not bow to anyone other than his God. His behaviour was tolerated for a while before it was finally brought to

the attention of Haman to see if this attitude was acceptable or not, seeing as it was because of his faith.

When Haman saw for himself the way Mordecai refused to honour him, he was full of wrath. But his anger was not directed towards Mordecai alone, for the officials had pointed out to him the other Jews in the community, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of king Ahasuerus – the people of Mordecai.

Evil scheme

Haman set to work planning the downfall of these insolent Jews. He connected with fortune tellers to find out the best time to make his attack before going to the king for approval.

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto

Haman, The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to you.

Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Esther 3:8-15

I can't imagine how devastated Mordecai must have felt when he realised what Haman was planning to do. His defiance of Haman had jeopardised all the Jews. This was unimaginable. He could accept

personal persecution for his faith for this is what Jews were brought up to encounter, but to think that his actions had rebounded upon every Jew was a heavy responsibility to shoulder.

Mordecai couldn't hold back his grief. He tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign to all that he was in mourning, and went about in the city crying with a loud and bitter cry. He even came to the gate of the palace to beg for pardon for the Jews, but nobody wearing sackcloth was allowed to enter.

There was a great mourning amongst the Jews in every province where the king's commandment had been published. They fasted, wept and wailed; and many lay in sackcloth hoping with all their hearts that God would see the fact that they were humbling themselves before him begging for him to step in and deliver them from this evil scheme.

Mordecai seeks help

Esther had no notion of what was going on in the streets outside the palace, it was her maids and chamberlains who came and told her that Mordecai was sitting in sackcloth seemingly in terrible distress. Esther didn't like the sound of this so she sent her servants to take away his sackcloth and give him new clothes to cheer his spirits. But the report came back that Mordecai had refused to accept them. This situation was a great puzzle to Esther so she sent her

maids and chamberlains to enquire from Mordecai what was troubling him.

Mordecai was convinced that God had allowed Esther to be in her elevated position just so that she could intercede for the Jews, her people, when they were threatened with annihilation. God had already foreseen that this situation would arise. This was Esther's pay-back time. Mordecai had cared for her when tragedy had taken her parents. Now it was her turn to take responsibility for her people when there was nobody else who could help.

Unfortunately, there was a terrible problem. Apparently, the king had made a law stating that whoever, man or woman, should come to him into the inner court, whom he had not called for, was to be put to death, except such to whom he should hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live, and Esther had not been called to come in unto the king for thirty days!

Mordecai could not sympathise with her situation, there was too much at stake ... He emphasised that if she wasn't prepared to speak up for her people then God would raise up a deliverer from somewhere else, and who knew how long it would be before that happened for God had sent many deliverers in the past, but he made sure she knew that her and her father's house would be destroyed. But then he sowed a seed of faith in her heart as to why she was really in the palace ... "And

who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

The need is the call

Esther certainly didn't waste any time, and knew instinctively what to do. She told him to gather all the Jews present in Shushan to fast for her for three days and three nights, and she and her maids would do the same. Then she would go in to the king uncalled for, and if she perished, well, she perished.

Up to this point I can quite understand what she was doing. She was completely out of her depth with the situation and needed immediate help from God for time was short, and the only desperate solution for getting God's attention was to get everyone to humble themselves and do a drastic fast for her. This would not have been an easy thing for her in particular to do as her true identity as a Jew had not been revealed. She was the queen, every eye would have been on her, and her every movement would have been monitored.

On the third day of her fast, whilst still fasting, she mustered up all her courage to face her fate. She put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house. And it was so that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she immediately obtained favour in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand, so she drew near and touched the top of it.

Then the king made an amazing statement ... “What do you want, Esther, what is your request? It will be given you to the half of the kingdom!”

The power of a woman

I think this statement is absolutely incredible. All she did was stand there! He took one look at her and was prepared to give her half of his kingdom. This is an amazing affect to have on anybody! But then she had put plenty of effort in before approaching him. She had taken time to prepare herself, her make-up was perfect, her hair just right, her clothes impeccable, her entry demure and graceful, she must have looked beautiful, gorgeous, stunning. She made the very most of her assets: beauty, figure, femininity, humility, vulnerability. Yes, she had many God given assets at her disposal.

The king had been surrounded by court politicians for days on end and she had just made a wonderful entrance totally captivating him by her very appearance! He would have done whatever she wanted! She could have twisted him around her little finger! But she didn't ask ... Instead she invited her husband, and Haman – the very man who was persecuting the Jews, to a feast that she would prepare for them. **Esther** wanted to wine and dine **him!**

Now this is something every woman should take note of ... Esther used all her feminine wiles and

charms to lure and entice her husband. She was an extremely powerful woman who was bestowed with everything the king wanted, and even in her innocence, she knew just how to use it.

Reverence

Although she was the queen she didn't make use of her status or authority by aggressively barging into the king's court demanding an audience with him, as her wifely and queenly right. There were no reprimands that he hadn't spent any time, or had any communication with her for the past thirty days. No, she came with reverence and fear, knowing that if she messed this up by approaching in the wrong manner, she could blow the whole thing and the entire Jewish population would be terminated. This was too important an issue and must be handled wisely and delicately. The Bible records that Sarah called her husband, Abraham, lord. A foolish woman will goad the sleeping lion until he attacks, but a wise woman walks very softly.

Intoxicating

On the night of the banquet she had prepared for the king and Haman, instead of making her request known she invited them, yet again, to another banquet for the following evening.

The mystery of these meetings must have been intoxicating for the king. She had been the perfect

hostess, and he had enjoyed being in her company. He hadn't only feasted on the lavish food, he had also feasted his eyes on her loveliness. He wanted her so badly, and wanted the opportunity to express the love and admiration he had for her by his indulgence in her. Esther was not playing cat and mouse with him, she was in actual fact waiting all the time for God to give her guidance. Like the woman God chose to bear his son, Mary, she was able to hide things in her heart and see how God would work everything out. What a tremendous quality!

The way to do it

When she did feel that God had given her permission to speak to her husband she made her request with tears and supplications.

Falling at his feet she pleaded for him to be her knight in shining armour, to save her, and her people, from the wicked dragon which was about to pounce and completely destroy them. He was her saviour, and she was begging him. What man could resist this demonstration of complete vulnerability? The king was, in actual fact, at **her** mercy!

You know the rest of the story. The tables were turned completely, and the Jews still celebrate the Feast of Purim to this day as a memorial of this unprecedented turn of events in their history. But this extremely powerful woman did not use weapons or force, there were no outbursts of rage or anger; no threats. No, she used what God had given her,

softness, meekness, vulnerability, wisdom from God, and because of this **all** the Jews were saved.

We may not be in the position where we have to plead for our own lives or the lives of a nation, but let those of us who are married learn from this woman's marvellous example how to be humble in our spirit and attitude when we approach and make requests from our own husbands, and those who are in authority over us.

Chapter 13

The Power of Women

Women would do well to realise that they don't have to be 'bolshy' to get what they want. There are many examples in scripture of women who made unbelievable requests and received what they asked for.

The Shunammite woman

An account which amazes me is that of the wealthy, married Shunammite woman who hosted Elisha, and his servant Gehazi, whenever they passed through her neighbourhood. It was because she recognised that Elisha was a holy man of God that she suggested to her husband that they build a little room on the wall of their house, and make it

comfortable by putting inside it a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, so that whenever he passed by that way he could lodge there. This was indeed an act of consideration and respect.

One day, when Elisha was resting on the bed she had provided for him, he told Gehazi to tell her that he was very grateful for the way she had taken care of him, and wanted to know if there was anything he could do to bless her - speak to the king on her behalf, or to the captain of the army? But she said she needed nothing and was quite content as she lived amongst her own people. Then he asked Gehazi what on earth he could do for her. Gehazi revealed to him that she had no children, and her husband was old.

Immediately, Elisha told Gehazi to call the woman to him. When he had called her, she stood in the doorway, and he said to her, "About this season, according to the time of life, you shall embrace a son." She found it difficult to believe, but sure enough the prophecy spoken by this man of God came to pass and she bore a son.

Stolen gift

One day, when the child was grown, he went out to his father to the reapers in the field. He complained about severe headaches, so his father told a lad to carry him to his mother. The young child sat on his mother's knees until noon, then tragically

died. The woman then did a strange thing – she laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. She asked her husband if he would let one of his servants and an ass go with her to the man of God, and she would come back again. When he asked why she wanted to go, because it was neither a new moon, nor a sabbath, she told him everything was fine she just needed to see him about something.

This is amazing! Her son, this gift from God, had just died and she didn't breath a word of it to her husband! She didn't even appear to be grieving! What on earth was going on in this woman's mind? One thing is certain, her mind was racing. She had formed a plan and she wasn't going to let anything thwart her from acting it out. She told the servant to drive on forward, not to slow down unless she told him to, until they both reached the man of God who was at mount Carmel.

Elisha saw her from afar and instructed Gehazi, his servant, to run out to meet her to see if everything was well with her, her husband, and her child. But she told Gehazi that everything was fine. She wasn't prepared to waste her breath on talking to the servant, she wanted to speak with the boss, face to face, without any delay.

When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. This was not protocol, this was not

how you treated God's man and Gehazi was about to stand in her way until Elisha told him to leave her alone. Her soul was vexed within her: and the Lord had hid it from him, and not told him her problem.

Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up your loins, and take my staff in your hand, and go your way: if you meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute you, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. And he arose, and followed her. And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awake.

2 Kings 4:28-31

Only the man of God

It was no concern of hers what he commanded his servant to do, she had made up her mind that she would not leave the man of God until he had sorted this situation out. This woman was not being side-tracked, neither was she being bossy. She was well aware of her place as a woman but she knew only God could help her child. Time was ticking by, her son needed God's attention now, and God worked through his man, not the trainee. She needed to stay focussed in this trial.

All due credit to Elisha, he could see her determination, and vexation of spirit, and allowed himself to be put out to travel all the way to her house on this urgent errand. Perhaps he would not have considered doing this for another woman, but she had shown her respect for his position with the way she had made provision for him over the years. She had never made any requests before, so in a way he must have felt obligated to help her now that she was asking. And God certainly must have felt that way too, as I am sure Elisha would never have acted on his own initiative.

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them both, and prayed unto the LORD.

And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child grew warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up your son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

2 Kings 4:32-37

This was all she wanted. She wasn't making grand requests and claims, no she just wanted the child God had given to her to be restored back to her, and she wasn't going to let go of the man of God until she got what she wanted. She didn't even tell her husband that the child was dead because she couldn't accept that this was the end of the child's life.

The way the Shunammite woman handled this situation must have pleased God for he honoured her faith. This is the one quality that God is always looking for – faith in him. It is not force that will make God change his mind; we cannot bully him into doing anything. He will resist this type of person with a heavy hand.

Canaanite woman

There have been times when God has made decisions and women have managed to change his mind so that he did for them what he had not intended to do. We have a wonderful example of this in the gospel of Matthew when Jesus was approached by a woman who was not an Israelite.

Then Jesus went from there, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, you Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed

with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:21-24

Ignored by Jesus

Could it be possible that Jesus actually ignored this woman when she cried out for mercy? We don't hear very much of this type of attitude from Jesus, we usually hear that he had compassion on, and healed everyone who came to him. But this is exactly what he did – he ignored her! Why?

The reason for this harsh treatment was that he had not come to anyone other than God's people – the Israelites. Jesus had no truck with Gentiles, his commission was to tell God's people that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand, and there were many Israelites he still had to preach to.

The disciples felt no compassion for this woman either. They had been in the divine healing ministry with Jesus and seen many people delivered from demonic influences, and miraculously healed, but they utterly disregarded her desperate pleas.

But she wouldn't give up or go away. She had a need. Her daughter was in great distress, she

couldn't stand by and let her daughter suffer like this when she knew Jesus could help her.

Then she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Matthew 15:25-26

She acted on impulse out of desperation and did the only thing she knew to do. She fell at his feet and worshipped him hoping that he would notice her distress and anguish of heart.

Jesus only did the will of his father and her request was not in the purpose of God, but he could not ignore the fact that she recognised him as being sent from God, so he gave her the courtesy of answering her. The problem was that his answer was actually an insult. She was asking for help, but he was calling her a dog.

This was the way God saw the other nations, if they weren't his people they were classed as outsiders, dogs; and Jesus had not been sent for them.

But this poor, distraught woman accepted his insult without flinching or taking offence, there were greater issues at stake than worrying about her pride being wounded. She agreed with what he said, acknowledging that, yes, she was a dog, and she was prepared to act like one and just lick up a small crumb if he would drop one to her.

Her answer actually surprised Jesus into altering his attitude towards her and giving in to her request even though she was a Genile. Our blessed Jesus does not have a heart of stone.

And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 15:25-28

Changing God's mind

Oh that we were people with the right sort of attitudes that would surprise God, delight God, with our faith and dependence upon him. That we would not demand and try to bully him into doing what we wanted him to do, but would reason with proper arguments and understanding of situations.

Come now, and **let us reason together**, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18

The people who seem to change God's mind are those who can talk his language and plead on behalf of others, like this Canaanite woman pleading for her daughter; Abraham pleading for Lot and his family. But we can only plead if we really identify with those

we are interceding for, **and** if we constantly remind ourselves that we are talking to God Almighty. God wants relationship, but we must know how to approach him.

The power of a woman lies in the fact that she is able to get what she wants. Worldly women feel they need to wrap their man around their little fingers, being so irresistible, or so daunting, that their men cannot say, no. Many men are actually afraid of their women!

But the godly woman understands God's order and is willing to become weak in order to be strong. She doesn't have to seduce or threaten her husband in order to manipulate him. She just obeys, honours and serves him from a loving heart. What man can resist that type of treatment?

Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their

own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham,
calling him lord: whose daughters you are...

1 Peter 3:1-6

We must remember that we are all in training.

Chapter 14

Which Woman?

What most Christians don't realise is that there are two judgment seats written about in the Bible. The first is the Judgment Seat of Christ where those who are saved shall stand before Christ himself to give an account, to him, for the things they have said and done in the flesh. These people are classed as his servants because during their lives they changed masters from serving the devil to serving Christ. Jesus the Christ will at this time judge his servants to see who is worthy to reign with him for his one thousand year Millennial Reign.

Make no mistake about it, there is a day of reckoning coming when we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account for

the deeds done in our flesh. We shall have to give an account for our words, deeds, thoughts, motives. This is not something any one of us can run away from. We can live in a dream now, but one day we will wake up and be forced to face reality.

Judgment Seat of Christ

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the **day of judgment**. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

Matthew 12:36-37

And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have that is yours. His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: you ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which has ten talents. For unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.

And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:25-30

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion **with the unbelievers.**

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be **beaten with many stripes.**

Luke 12:45-47

That is why we labour, that, whether alive or dead, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ;** that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11

Judgment Seat of God

After the thousand years when Christ has ruled with a rod of iron and totally subdued all his enemies, then Jesus will hand everything back to his Father so that God may be all in all. It is then that everyone who has ever lived will face God in the flesh!

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

We must not be foolish enough to think that we are not accountable for the way we live here on earth. There is no such thing as a small decision – every single decision we make has consequences and sets the course for the rest of our lives. When God opens our eyes to the truth and we become followers of Jesus, asking God to rule our lives, then we are given instructions to follow.

...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and you be separate**, says the Lord,

and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

Two women

There are two women running throughout the Bible – the Whore, and the Bride. The Whore represents the mixture, everything detestable and abominable that God hates and will eventually judge (Babylon, Whore, Jezebel). The Bride represents the people whom God has called out to be holy, separate, pure, peculiar; whom he will one day, as an indulgent father, delight in presenting and giving to his beloved son, Jesus, to wed.

Every woman mentioned in the Bible falls into one of these two categories – the Whore or the Bride. Every example is there for us to look at, and analyse, to see if we have any traces of their attitudes in our lives. All of us, men as well as women (for in Christ there is neither male nor female – Galatians 3:28), have to decide which camp we are in, the world or the Kingdom.

The Whore

If we decide to stay in the world, finding fulfilment in its fashion, culture, and entertainment, then we can expect to be judged accordingly for we have become lovers of this world which makes us the enemies of God. We have accepted the

seduction of that spirit of Jezebel which is still at work today.

From where comes wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.

You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

James 4:1-4

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not**

of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Revelation 18:1-8

For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

Revelation 19:2

The Bride

If, however, we want to attain to the Kingdom of God, then God expects us to **purify ourselves** and be holy, as he is holy. We have been justified – made righteous by the righteousness of Christ; but holiness is something completely different. We prove our love for God by denying ourselves worldly pleasures, and losing all desire for the things of the world that the devil would like to entice us with. Knowing God's word is a great way to save ourselves from being unnecessarily tempted...

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to your word.
With my whole heart have I sought you: O let
me not wander from your commandments. Your
word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin
against you.

Psalm 119:9-11

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time
your hearts be overcharged with giddiness, and
drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that
day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall
it come on all them that dwell on the face of the
whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always,
that you may be **accounted worthy to escape**
all these things that shall come to pass, and to
stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:34-36

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have
not defiled their garments; and they shall walk
with me in white: for **they are worthy.**

Revelation 3:4

Get prepared

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also
loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he
might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing
of water by the word, **that he might present
it to himself a glorious church, not having
spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that**

it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: **but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

Ephesians 5:25-32

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **his wife has made herself ready.** And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:7-9

The woman God seeks

Proverbs 31 gives a wonderful description of how a virtuous woman conducts herself. But it also warns of how few women earn the right to be called virtuous. Women were not meant to sit around passively whilst their husbands did all the business. This is often why women feel so unfulfilled, they are not occupying themselves with activities which will

benefit and progress their families. They have a very important role to play which will bring personal joy, and order in the home.

Richard Wurmbrand, a servant of Christ who for fourteen years was tortured for his faith in Romanian prisons, said many profound things. It was he who said that not only should a woman learn how to serve her husband, but men also needed to learn how to serve, for one day it is possible that they may be counted worthy to be called the Bride of Christ. It is therefore, imperative that all believers desiring this state observe the following verses of this enlightening passage, for this is what God and Christ look for when seeking out a virtuous woman. We have to understand that we all need to work at serving our husband (Christ), and family (brethren), if we want to be found worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considers a field, and buys it: with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She

perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She stretches out her hand to the poor; yes, she reaches forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes fine linen, and sells it; and delivers girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but you excel them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Proverbs 31:10-32

It's later than you think

God emphasised to Maurice and Me at the very beginning of the year 2010 saying that time was short

– indeed, it's later than we think! Jesus is coming very soon. The one world government is ready to be set in place; the prophecies spoken in Revelation are coming to pass; judgment time is very near.

It is time for the Bride to separate herself and come out of Babylon, so that she may be purified and made ready for her Lord. If she does not heed this warning she will be judged with Babylon.

The time to act is now!